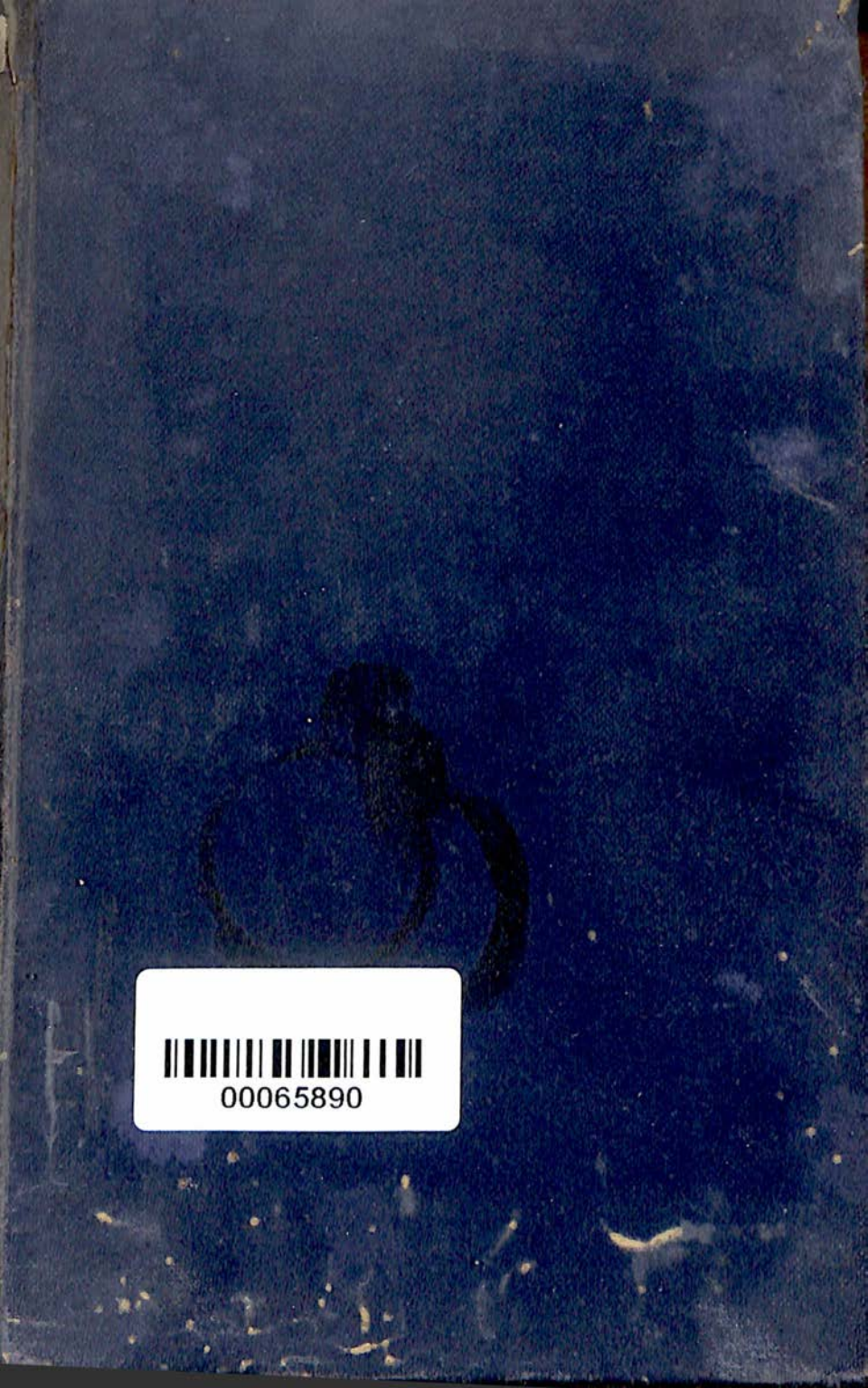
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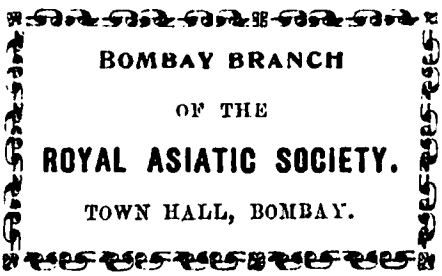

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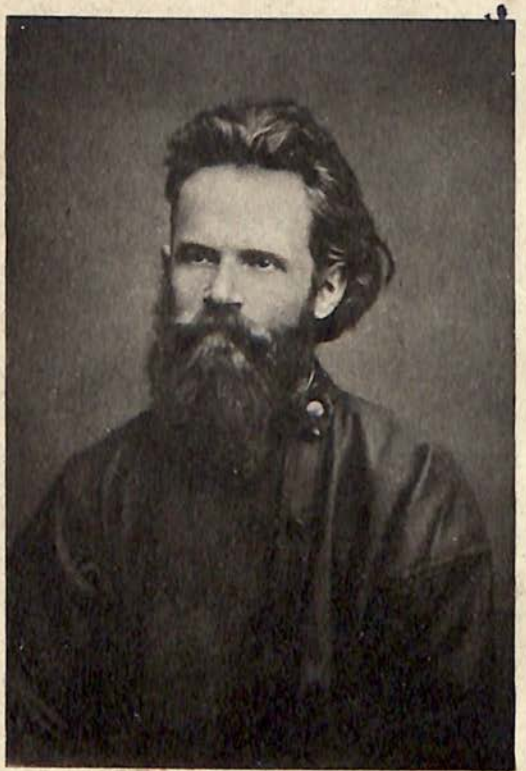

Leo. Deutsch.

SIXTEEN YEARS IN SIBERIA

BY LEO DEUTSCH

TRANSLATED BY HELEN CHISHOLM

WITH NOTES AND A BRIEF SUMMARY
OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT
IN RUSSIA

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PREFACE

TO NEW AND CHEAPER EDITION

SINCE the first publication in English of the following memoir it has also appeared in French, German, Italian, Dutch, Polish, and Bulgarian, while the original Russian has been printed in Switzerland and smuggled into Russia.

In July, 1904, the notorious political trial at Königsberg took place, in which certain German subjects were prosecuted for smuggling Russian revolutionary literature over the Russian frontier. In this trial, it will be remembered, after sensational revelations had been made as to the falsifying of documents by highly-placed Russian officials in order to manufacture evidence for the prosecution, the accused were either acquitted or given light sentences for technical infringements of German law. An interpellation concerning the case was made in the Reichstag by Herr Haase, and in his reply Count von Bülow, the Imperial Chancellor, cited the case of Leo Deutsch's extradition in 1884, in order to prove that Prussia's political action in such matters is at the present time in every way consistent with that pursued by Prince Bismarck in the last century. Count von Bülow's speech and the documents he quoted,

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together with Bismarck's marginal notes thereupon, are given in an appendix to the present volume, and form a curious gloss on the diplomatic relations between Russia and Germany.

The revolutionary tendencies among the different classes in Russia continue to manifest themselves in various ways. The Liberals, or reformers as distinguished from revolutionists, exercise only a spasmodic influence upon the Government, and many of them secretly support and subsidise—curiously enough, as it appears to some English minds—the extreme form of revolution: the Revolutionary Socialists or Terrorists. This is partly to be explained by the fact that any sudden panic on the part of the autocracy—as, for instance, that caused by the assassination of the Minister of the Interior, Plehve, on July 28, 1904—disposes the Tsar to put a less reactionary minister in power, and to favour concessions towards reform such as is advocated by Liberals: *e.g.* freedom of the press, and even the convocation in Petersburg of the Zemski Sobor, or general assembly of delegates from provincial councils—a kind of representative gathering, and the germ of a parliament.

The Russo-Japanese war, begun in 1904, has tended to make all classes more politically conscious. The fall of Port Arthur, and other military disasters in the Far East, shook public confidence in the power of the Government to cope with the situation. Face to face with the Japanese, the common soldier soon discovered the hollowness of the tales that had been told him as to the inferiority and savagery of his opponents, and his consciousness of having been wilfully deceived naturally conveyed itself to his friends at home, where the war has never been popular.

Though dissatisfaction with the present system of despotic government has become general, and the educated classes resent more and more the absence of any representative element whereby they might influence political affairs, yet it is the economic conditions that exert the strongest pressure. The industrial proletariat cannot be prevented, even by the bullets of the troops, from expressing the urgency of their needs by strikes and other disorganisations of industry; and the capitalists and rich manufacturers, who are severely taxed for undertakings over which they can exercise no control, are equally desirous of the political influence that an electoral franchise confers.

The Government has attempted to counteract the Labour movement by instituting "legal" trade-unions, each controlled by a representative of the Government, and under police supervision. These for a time served their purpose of pacifying discontent by the hope—never to be realised—of some investigation into the grievances of the workers; while incidentally they were used by the Government as a decoy. For the more intelligent and active among their members were blacklisted by the Government agent, and quietly deported from their homes to Siberia or the outlying provinces of the empire by administrative order. The working-classes are beginning to realise the specious character of the so-called concession, and it is worthy of special remark that the procession of unarmed strikers who, with their wives and children, marched to the Winter Palace in Petersburg to present a petition to the Tsar, on January 22, 1905, and were massacred in large numbers by the troops under Government orders, was organised by one of these legalised trade-unions. The remarkable manifestation of sympathy with the demands of the workmen shown, by both middle

and upper classes, on the occasion of this general strike, has been an object lesson both for the Russian Government and for the rest of the world. The members of the Bar struck work, and business in the law courts was at a standstill; the medical men of the Moscow government drew up a resolution declaring their solidarity with the workmen of Petersburg; the Town Council of Petersburg and other representative bodies voted large sums of money for the relief of those who had suffered from the brutal coercive measures adopted by the Government; and on February 6 the Assembly of Nobles in Petersburg supported by 158 votes to 20 a resolution petitioning the Tsar to grant some measure of constitutional reform.

The agrarian question is to a large extent involved in that of urban industrialism, partly because it is now quite customary for peasants to leave their farm work in charge of the women-folk during the winter months, and flock into the towns to work temporarily in the factories and workshops. Here they share the needs and learn the aspirations of the operatives, and returning home they spread abroad the political knowledge they have gained. Desire for political power inspires not only the peasants but the landed proprietors. These latter, indeed, have spoken out with no uncertain tone, being, as they are, between the devil and the deep sea; for not only would they and their property be at the mercy of the peasants in the event of riots or of a general uprising, but they fear also that the Government may sacrifice them, as a class less immediately important to the bureaucracy, and may perhaps attempt to quiet the agricultural population by a confiscation of some portion of the landlords' estates for the benefit of the peasants, whose love for the land, and

yearning to own it either communally or individually, is traditional and deep-rooted.

Thus each class respectively begins to see plainly its personal advantage in having some representation in the central government; and in a country where conscription is in force, all these various feelings are of course reflected in the army. Already regiments have refused to fire on strikers, and if the troops cannot be relied on for unquestioning obedience, the Government must obviously be unable to uphold the autocracy by strength of arms.

All this has a tenfold significance when we recollect that the cry for reform is even now but inarticulate, and comes from a nation officially tongue-tied; for not only is the Russian press muzzled, but everyone who ventures to censure the existing political, social, or religious system, whether he be of high or low degree, takes his life and liberty in his hand. A workman on strike may be shot down or bayoneted by the soldiery before his petition is even heard; and an author of world-wide repute holding liberal views—as, for instance, Maxim Gorki—may be imprisoned and not allowed the use of writing materials.

The pressure of public opinion both at home and abroad will probably in the near future oblige the Russian Government to adopt some form of constitution; but any limitation of the monarch's absolute authority which the bureaucracy, to save their own skins, may force upon the Tsar, is likely to be of a more or less illusory character, not in the least commensurate with the people's needs and hopes, and it will certainly not in any way meet the definitely republican views of the Socialists. Still, such a measure might temporarily quiet the country; for as long as imperial despotism persists in regarding as

high treason any attempt to petition for a redress of grievances, the forces of discontent will increase and spread underground till they coalesce and overwhelm the autocracy in a general upheaval. As we have seen in the case of the occasional alliance between Liberals and Revolutionary Socialists, the demand for mere reform, if treated as revolt, is bound to develop into Revolution.

HELEN CHISHOLM

LONDON,
February, 1905

TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE

THE author of the following narrative is a leader in the Russian revolutionary movement. The German transliteration of his name is given here as being the form he himself uses in Western Europe; but he is called "Deuc" in the English version of Stepniak's *Underground Russia*, which was translated from the Italian, retaining the Italian transliteration of names. A more exact rendering of the Russian would be Deitch, the "ei" pronounced somewhat as in the English word "rein."

George Kennan's valuable work, *Siberia and the Exile System*, the fruit of investigations carried on under circumstances of much difficulty and even danger, has made its many English and American readers acquainted with the true conditions of life among Russian political prisoners and exiles. The story given in the present volume of the painful and tragic events that took place in the political prisons at Kara after Mr. Kennan had left the Russian Empire was written to him by, among others, a friend resident in Kara at the time, whose letter he published in his book. In it are also to be found additional particulars concerning the earlier or later history of many persons whose names occur in the following pages; and it thus throws an interesting light on Mr. Deutsch's story, which is told so quietly, with such an absence of sensationalism, that it is sometimes necessary to read between the lines in order to grasp fully the terrible realities of the situation.

It may, perhaps, be useful to readers unfamiliar with the history of the Russian revolutionary movement if I give here a rough sketch of its development, and of its position at the present time.

From the first consolidation of the Empire under the Tsars in the latter half of the sixteenth century, Russian despotism has consistently regarded with apprehension and disfavour all manifestation of independent thought among its subjects. There has never been a time when those bold enough to indulge in it, even in what English people would consider a very mild form, were not liable to persecution, and this traditional attitude of repression and coercion had the inevitable result. Even early in the eighteenth century secret societies had come into being, but these were mostly of the various religious sects or of the Freemasons. When they began to assume a political character they were at first confined entirely to the upper classes, and took the form of revolts organised among the military, the last and most important being that of the Decabrists (or Decembrists), who attempted to overthrow the monarchy on the occasion of Nicholas I.'s accession in 1825.

Liberal views were to a certain extent fostered by Alexander I. (1801–1825), who at one time openly talked of granting a Constitution. Russians who visited Western Europe, officers in the Napoleonic campaigns, and others, had "brought France into Russia," had made the French language fashionable, and thus had opened a way for the importation of new philosophical, scientific, and political literature, eagerly appreciated by the developing acuteness of the Russian mind. Literary influence, even the purely romantic, has throughout ranged itself on the side of liberty, Pushkin heading the poets and Gogol the novelists. Indeed, one may safely say that up to the present day

nearly every Russian author of any note has been implicated—some to a greater, some to a less degree—in the revolutionary movement, and has suffered for the cause.

Alexander I. in his later years, and his successor Nicholas I., fell back on a reactionary policy. Even Freemasonry was prohibited, mere literary societies of the early forties were considered seditious, and their members were punished with imprisonment and death. There now sprang up political secret societies, whose dream was of a federal republic, or at least of a constitutional monarchy.

The accession of Alexander II. in 1855 strengthened the hopes of the reformers. The study of political and social questions became the fashion; while professors, students, and the "intellectuals" of the upper and middle classes warmly engaged in the "underground" movement. With this period are associated such names as those of Herzen, Bakounin, and Tchernishevsky, whose writings were the inspiration of the party, and even influenced for a time the Tsar himself. But the emancipation of the serfs, on February 19th, 1861, bitterly disappointed those who had hoped great things of the new monarch, and who saw from the way in which this and other liberal measures were emasculated by officials, to whom the drafting of them was entrusted by the Tsar, how futile it was to expect any effective reform as a grace from an autocrat. The reform movement, now definitely socialistic, speedily took on a revolutionary character, and culminated in the active sympathy and support given to the Polish revolt of 1863.

Alexander II. resorted to the old coercive methods; all attempts to voice the aspirations and needs of the people, or even the academic discussion of political questions, were met with the savage punishments of martial law,

imprisonment, exile, death. In face of a new enactment, which had professed to give fair trial to all accused persons, special courts were set up to try political offenders; and the practice of banishment by "administrative methods" (*i.e.* without any trial at all) was instituted.

A time of enforced quiet followed, when the leaders of the movement were either dead, imprisoned, or had fled into voluntary exile abroad; but it served as a time of self-education and study for the younger generation, at home or in foreign Universities, and in the early seventies the revival came. Our author here takes up the story with his account of the Propagandist movement, which was peaceful, except in so far as it aimed at stirring up the peasants to demand reform; for, in the absence of any constitutional methods for expressing their desires, this could only be effected by organised uprisings. He describes how this movement developed into terrorism under the system of "white terror" exercised by the Government, and how, after the assassination of Alexander II., the strong hand of despotism succeeded in checking, until a few years ago, the passionate struggle for liberty.

A new monarch and a new century have altered little the essential features of the situation, so far as relations between government and governed are concerned. Every day we have examples of the time-honoured policy, in the dragooning of Russia proper; the attempted Russification of Finland; and the deliberate fostering by the Government of anti-Semitism, with the covert design of counteracting the revolutionary activity of Jewish Socialists, discrediting their labour movement in the eyes of the Russian proletariat, and also distracting the latter from organisation on their own account.

But a significant change is at work to-day among the people. The peasants and working-classes in town and country, formerly the despair of those who strove to arouse in them political consciousness, are being awakened by the inevitable development of industry to a sense of their duties and their rights. A genuine labour movement has arisen, which, in face of the intolerance of the authorities, has naturally taken on a political character, and affiliated itself to the successors of the older revolutionary societies.

The words "anarchist" and "nihilist," so commonly associated with the Russian revolutionists, are complete misnomers to-day (as, indeed, they always have been, except in the case of a few isolated individuals). The movement is now carried on chiefly by two organisations: the "Revolutionary Socialists," and the party to which our author belongs, and helped to found, the "Social Democratic" Labour Party; associated with the latter being the powerfully organised social-democratic "General Jewish Labour Union of Lithuania, Poland, and Russia," usually known as the "Bund." Of these the Revolutionary Socialists alone still adhere to the practice of terrorism in a modified form, and even they have always proclaimed their intention of abandoning it directly "constitutional" methods are allowed to them. The aim of the revolutionists is to replace the present autocratic government by a social republic, under which the various races now grouped within the empire shall each have scope to develop its national individuality. Groups are actively at work in widely distant localities, even Siberia furnishing her contingent, while Poland and Finland have various revolutionary organisations of their own.

The Government's policy at present is to exile to Siberia without trial, or intern in some place distant from home,

all persons known or even suspected to be interesting themselves in the movement. This is effected principally through the instrumentality of the gendarmerie, which was instituted by Nicholas I. as a sort of spy system, primarily intended to unearth official abuses and report upon them directly to the Tsar. It soon, however, became imbued with the prevailing spirit of the bureaucracy; its members shut their eyes to the official corruption everywhere prevalent, and they have since confined their attention to unearthing "political" delinquencies. The force has at least one representative in every town of any size, and it has a vaguely defined roving commission to watch and arrest all persons who appear to be suspicious characters; these may be kept in imprisonment for an indefinite time, or may be exiled "by administrative methods." It has become an adjunct to the ordinary police, although quite independent of them, and is generally employed in all matters of secrecy.[1] Travellers from Western Europe who observe too closely the life and conditions of the country are liable to arrest in this way. Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace and Mr. Kennan, among others, had this experience.

The mere existence of such a force may help to explain the discomfort of even the ordinary peaceful Russian citizen under the present system of government; and he is further incommoded by the presence in every house of a police-spy. For the *dvornik* or *concierge*, though paid by the inmates of the house, is appointed subject to the approval of the police, and is responsible to them. He keeps the keys, and is bound to deliver them up to the police whenever they may take it into their heads to require a domiciliary search. As an instance of the petty tyranny that occurs I may mention that the possession of

[1] See *Russia*, by D. M. Wallace.

a hectograph (or any such appliance for multiplying MSS.) needs a special permission from the police.

The police have power to break up any gathering in a private house where more than seven guests are assembled; this is frequently done, even on such ordinary occasions as a wedding or funeral, if many students or such-like "untrustworthy" people are of the party. When a town or district is under martial law—an everyday state of things in Russia—the above number is still further reduced; indeed, it is quite common for the police to prohibit *all* gatherings.

Readings at entertainments for the poor got up by philanthropic people may only be given from books licensed by the police for the purpose (and mostly very dull); the catalogues of lending libraries may contain only such books as are definitely permitted, many being excluded that are not forbidden to private persons—though the latter, again, are by no means free to choose their reading, many authors being entirely prohibited within the empire; and whole columns of newspapers including foreign ones that have come through the post are blacked out by order of the censor. Private debating societies' meetings or lectures, however innocent, are practically impossible to all who are not in the best odour with the authorities, except under the strictest precautions against discovery—such as closing of shutters, disguise of preparations, and a warning to guests not to arrive simultaneously.

It is evident what opportunity all this gives to officials "on the make" for demonstrating their zeal, and it accounts for the fact that every year hundreds of persons not accused of any definite offence are removed from their homes. Nearly everyone has friends and relations so banished, and the result of such systematic interference with private

liberty is that almost everyone in Russia, outside official circles, is more or less in league against the bureaucratic government. The countenance, and even financial support, afforded to the revolutionists, not only by sympathisers in free countries, but by the general public at home, is one great source of their strength. They are willingly assisted in evading arrest and in escaping from prison or from exile; and prohibited literature (printed abroad, or secretly in Russia itself) is circulated and sold throughout the country in immense quantities—not only leaflets by the thousand, but reviews, some elaborately illustrated, and even books of a more solid character. The Russian original of the present work will presumably soon be on the "illegal" market.

The illustrations are reproductions of photographs taken from life.

H. C.

LONDON, *July*, 1903.

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SIXTEEN YEARS IN SIBERIA

CHAPTER I

JOURNEY TO GERMANY—IMPRISONMENT IN FREIBURG—EPISODES FROM THE PAST OF THE REVOLUTIONARY MOVEMENT

IN the beginning of March, 1884, I travelled from Zurich, through Basel, to Freiburg in Baden. The object of my journey was to smuggle over the frontier a quantity of Russian socialistic literature, printed in Switzerland, in order that it might then be distributed by secret channels throughout Russia, where of course it was prohibited. In Germany a special law against the Social-Democratic movement was then in force. The *Sozialdemokrat* was published in Zurich, and had to be smuggled over the German frontier, where the watch was very keen, rendering most difficult the despatch to Russia of Russian, Polish, and other revolutionary literature printed in Switzerland. Before the enactment of the special law in August, 1878, the procedure had been simple. At that time the publications were sent by post to some town in Germany near the Russian border, and thence, by one way or another, despatched to Russia. Later, however, it became necessary to convey them as travellers' luggage across the German frontier, in order to get them through the custom-house, after which they could be forwarded to some German town nearer the

Russian border. It was on this transport business that I was engaged.

My luggage consisted of two large boxes, half-filled with literature, and their upper parts packed with linen and other wearing apparel, that the Customs officers might not be suspicious. In one trunk I had men's clothes, in the other women's, supposed to belong to my (non-existent) wife; and for this reason there really was a lady present at the Customs examination in Basel,—the wife of my friend Axelrod from Zurich. She offered to take further charge of the transport, thinking she would run less risk than I if the police became suspicious. As, however, the examination of the luggage went off quite smoothly, I declined the offer, hardly thinking any further trouble probable.

Besides Frau Axelrod a Basel Socialist was with me at the station. He had advised me how to carry out my perilous mission, for he was experienced in such business, having managed many transports of forbidden literature. Only a few days before, accompanied by a Polish acquaintance of mine, Yablonski, he had been to Freiburg, whence they had despatched some Polish literature. He now recommended to me a cheap hotel in Freiburg, close to the station; and in good spirits I climbed into a third-class carriage. It was a Sunday, and the carriage was filled with people in gay holiday mood. Songs were sung, and unrestrained chatter filled the air. The guard was pompous and overbearing, as often happened then on German lines; I do not know if it is so still. When he saw that I was smoking, he told me very rudely, with a great show of official zeal, that this was not a smoking carriage. I answered politely that I had not been aware of it, and at once threw away my cigarette. He insisted peremptorily, however, that I must change carriages. "A bad omen," thought I, and still recall the sensation. I was out of temper, and felt irritated and uncomfortable. The weather, too, grew overcast, and a cold drizzle set in, which worked on my nerves.

The train moved off, and before I had got over my grumbling humour we were at Freiburg. It was between seven and eight in the evening. Landed on the platform, I looked out the porter of the Freiburger Hof, and gave him my luggage-check. He noticed at once that it showed the unusual weight of my boxes, and expressed his surprise thereat. To quiet any suspicion I told him at once unconcernedly that I was a student, and intended to study at Freiburg University, and that it was my books which made the trunks so heavy. The hotel was soon reached, and a room engaged, after which I betook myself to the restaurant for supper. As I passed by the buffet I saw the porter whispering earnestly with another man, apparently the landlord. Directly I had finished my meal the waiter brought me the visitors' book; and, as I had a Russian passport, lent me by a friend at the time of my flight from Russia, I at once signed myself in my friend's name, "Alexander Buligin, of Moscow." I then ordered writing materials and went to my room, but had barely shut the door behind me when there came a knock. At my "Come in!" there appeared, instead of a servant with writing things, as I had expected, a policeman, accompanied by a gentleman in civil dress. "I am an officer of the secret police," said the latter; "allow me to examine your trunks." Instantly I thought, "As Freiburg is so near the Swiss frontier, the police (to whom the porter must have announced the arrival of a young man with unusually heavy luggage), may think I have contraband goods; or they may take me for an anarchist, and suspect me of conveying dynamite." I tried, therefore, to look as harmless as possible, although I felt that things were awkward. Busied with the unlocking of my boxes, I let fall the remark that one of them contained the belongings of my wife, whom I expected shortly. No sooner, however, had the men begun to turn over my things, than I saw that my guess as to their search for contraband was incorrect; the detective was on the look-out for neither

contraband nor dynamite, but for books, and he immediately began to examine mine. I then concluded he was looking for German Social-Democratic literature; and I was astonished when, at sight of a little book bound in red, my gentleman cried triumphantly, "Ah, here we are!"

It was the *Calendar of the Naròdnaia Vòlya*,[1] a book that had come out about a year before this, and was openly sold by German booksellers.

"I must now have you searched," said the police agent.

Besides a notebook, a letter, and a pocket-book containing several hundred-mark notes, there were in my pockets a dozen numbers of the Zurich *Sozialdemokrat*, which I had brought with me to send to a Russian friend in Germany.

"Here at least is something that we can read!" said the detective in a satisfied tone; "now, I arrest you!"

"Why? What for?" asked I, much astonished.

"That you will soon find out; come along!" was the answer.

The procedure of the police agent was extraordinary in every way: no attempt was made to fulfil the legal enactments for the protection of personal safety; the domiciliary search was instituted without legal warrant; there were no witnesses. I insisted on the officer's counting over in my presence the money in my pocket-book, which they had confiscated, though of course that was not much guarantee for the security of my property.

As I was descending the steps of the hotel, a prisoner between my two guardian angels, a young lady carrying a small travelling-bag met us. The detective asked me if this were my wife, and, notwithstanding my reply in the negative, tried to seize hold of her. She evidently thought she had to do with some Don Juan, and fled screaming into the street; whereupon the detective ordered the

[1] *Naròdnaia Vòlya:* literally, "the People's Will," the name of the chief revolutionary party in Russia at the time with which the narrative is now dealing, and also of its secretly printed newspaper.—*Trans.*

policeman to lead me on, and himself followed the unknown lady.

The policeman now tried to take me by the arm, and so conduct me through the streets, but I hotly resisted such treatment, declaring that I had committed no crime, and that he had no possible justification for putting me in such a position.

We arrived at last at the House of Detention. Here I was searched again, and for the first time since my arrest was questioned by an official as to my personal identity.

My detective soon appeared, bringing the lady, who, weeping bitterly, protested her absolute innocence, and indignantly demanded the explanation of such an insult. Coming on the top of all my own experiences since my arrival in Freiburg this scene put me into a state of fury.

"What is all this?" cried I to the police officer. "How can you take upon yourself to insult this lady? I repeat again that I do not know her; she is not my wife, and I have never set eyes on her in my life before."

"Well, we shall see about that. It is my business. It is no affair of yours whom we arrest," declared he; and I thought to myself, "This is a nice state of things! We might as well be in Russia."

I was then told to follow a warder, who took me up to the first floor. The lock of a cell-door turned, grating, and I found myself installed in the Grand-Ducal prison of Baden.

When the warder had withdrawn with his lantern absolute silence reigned, and the chamber was perfectly dark. Lights were not allowed here either in the cells or passages. I took my bearings as well as I could, groping along the walls, and, having found a bed, I lay down fully dressed as I was. My mind was in a state of chaos; I could follow no clear train of thought, nor form any conclusions about what had occurred. The sense of fate weighed me down; my strength seemed broken.

Sinister dreams left me no peace all night, and consequently I awoke from slumber in a dazed condition, not knowing where I was or what had happened to me. When at last with an effort I realised my position, despair seized on me. Extradition to Russia stared me in the face; I could not banish the fear of it. True, at that time there was no extradition treaty between Germany and Russia which applied to political refugees.[1] But I had special reasons for fearing that I might be treated exceptionally; and that the significance of my position may be clear to the reader, I must now give some details of my earlier career.

In 1874, just ten years before the events described above, as a youth of nineteen I had joined the "Propagandist movement,"[2] which at that time engrossed a great number of young students throughout Russia. Like most of the young Propagandists, I was led to this chiefly by sympathy with the sufferings and endurance of the people. According to our views, it was the sacred duty of every reasonable and upright human being who really loved his country to devote all his powers to the object of freeing the people from the economic oppression, the slavery, the barbarism, to which they were subjected. The young generation, always most prone to pity the misfortunes of others, could not remain indifferent to the miserable situation of the newly enfranchised serfs. An entire social revolution in Russia appeared to the Propagandists the sole means of altering the existing wretched material conditions; and of removing the heavy burden on the people; following, therefore, the teaching of the Socialists of Western Europe, they set before themselves as their ultimate object the abolition of private property and the collective owner-

[1] This treaty was only concluded in the autumn of 1885.

[2] Organised by the revolutionists for teaching the principles of Socialism, and awakening the desire for liberty; for which purpose was instituted the policy of "going among the people," *i.e.* living among the peasants like one of themselves.—*Trans.*

ship of the means of production. The Propagandists felt entirely convinced that the people would instantly embrace their ideas and aims and join them at the first appeal. This belief was an inspiration to them, and spurred them to unlimited self-sacrifice for the idea that possessed them. These youths and girls renounced without hesitation their previous social position and the assured future that the existing order of things offered them; without further ado they left the educational institutions where they were studying, recklessly broke all family ties, and threw their personal fate into the balance, in order to live entirely for the idea, to sacrifice themselves without stint for the idea, to make every faculty and possibility serve in the sacred cause of the people's deliverance. Any personal sacrifice seemed to these young enthusiasts scarcely worth speaking of when the great cause was in question. The common ideal, the common aim, and the enthusiasm of each individual drew the Propagandists together into one great family, linked by all the ties of affection and mutual dependence. Fraternal relations of the most affectionate intimacy grew up among all these young people; a complete altruism governed their actions, and each was prepared for any sacrifice on behalf of another. Only in great historical moments, in the time of the early Christian martyrdoms, and the founding of religious sects, have proselytes manifested such personal devotion, such exalted feeling.[1]

In this elect band, however, there were found (as has happened in every such movement) individuals not capable of this unselfish fervour; there were among them some paltry spirits, and even some who proved traitors. Certainly the number of these latter was infinitesimally small; but the history of revolutionary movements shows sufficiently that hundreds of the most

[1] The reader who is interested in this period of the Russian revolution will find much information in the work of Professor Thun, *Geschichte der revolutionären Bewegung in Russland*, and in Stepniak's *Underground Russia*.

able secret or public agents of a government can never do a tithe of the harm to a secret society that can be effected by a single traitor in its own ranks. In this manner did treachery become pregnant with evil results for the Propagandists, and it gave to the movement a character it might otherwise never have developed. Early in the year 1874 the young revolutionists, men and women, went out "among the people," according to the plan they had formed; they distributed themselves among the villages, where they lived and dressed like peasants, carrying on an active Socialist propaganda. But scarcely had they begun operations when treachery made itself apparent; two or three of the initiated denounced the organisation, and delivered over hundreds of their comrades to the authorities. Searches and arrests took place without number; the police pounced on "guilty" and innocent alike, and all the prisons in Russia were soon filled to overflowing. In this one year more than a thousand persons were seized. Many of them suffered long years of imprisonment under the most horrible conditions, some committed suicide, others lost their reason, and in many cases long terms of incarceration resulted in illness and premature death. Under these circumstances the reader can conceive the bitter hatred kindled in the ranks of the Socialists against the traitors who had sacrificed so many lives. The knowledge of the victims' terrible sufferings would naturally incite their friends to avenge them; inevitably, too, the thought would arise of punishing treachery, in order to put a stop by intimidation to the trade of the informer. But the Propagandists were in the highest degree men of peace, and it was not easy for them to harbour thoughts of violence. When such ideas were first mooted, they long remained only subjects of discussion.

Not till the summer of 1876 did the first attempt to put the terrorist theory into practice take place. The circumstances were as follows. The members of a revolutionary

group well known at the time—the *Kiëv Buntari*[1]—had assembled at Elisavetgrad. I belonged to this organisation. Many of the members were "illegals,"[2] and for some time past the gendarmerie had been making captures among them, acting on the information of a traitor named Gorinòvitch. This Gorinòvitch had been imprisoned in 1874, and being in the greatest danger had saved himself by telling everything he knew about the Russian Socialists. His revelations had injured many; yet, as in numerous other cases, not a hair of this renegade's head would have been touched, if he had kept clear of revolutionary circles. But about two years after his release from prison he tried again to insinuate himself among us, and he managed to get into the confidence of some inexperienced young people, who of course had no notion of the part he had formerly played. From them he learned that the Kiëv Society had assembled at Elisavetgrad; he came there at once, and sought to find out what the persons he had before betrayed were doing. We recognised him, however, and it soon became evident to us that he was playing the spy, and preparing some fresh treachery. So I and one other comrade resolved to put an end to his life.

Our determination could not be carried into effect in Elisavetgrad itself, or it might have resulted in giving the police a clue for the discovery of our organisation. We therefore asked Gorinòvitch if he would go with us to Odessa to find the persons he was in search of, and he agreed. There in a lonely spot we attempted to execute our mission, and left Gorinòvitch lying, as we thought, dead, with a paper fastened on his breast bearing

[1] *Bunt* means both "uprising" and "revolt"; the name of the society might be translated "Agitators of Kiëv." Its object was to stir up and organise risings among the peasantry.—*Trans.*

[2] In the language of the Russian revolutionaries those are called "illegals" who have for any reason already become suspected by the authorities, and who therefore must conceal their identity under fictitious names.

the inscription, "So perish all traitors!" But he was only severely injured, was found by the police, and survived to give information concerning his attempted assassination. Searches and arrests followed in due course, and although at the time I succeeded in avoiding capture, in the autumn of the following year I was arrested, together with other comrades, on account of the famous Tchigirìn case.[1]

I was imprisoned in Kiëv, but in the beginning of 1878 I escaped[2] in company with Stefanòvitch and Bohanòvsky.

Those who were concerned in the attempt against Gorinòvitch were prosecuted for the first time in November, 1879, at a period when both the "red" and the "white" terrorism[3] had blazed up. After a series of attempts against different representatives of the Government, the revolutionists had concentrated their entire strength on the endeavour to assassinate Alexander II. The Government combated the terrorist movement by means of special enactments, martial law, and death penalties, to which large numbers of people were sentenced who were perfectly innocent of complicity in the above deeds. On November 19th, some days before the beginning of the Gorinòvitch case (and after the accused had been acquainted with the facts alleged against them,

[1] At the time of the emancipation of the serfs the peasants in the Tchigirìn district of the province of Kiëv did not wish to divide into private property the land allotted to them, but to hold it in common, as was done in the north of Russia. In 1875 the Government took the harshest measures against them: arrests, executions, and persecutions of every kind; but the peasants held firm. The revolutionists, among others Stefanòvitch, Bohanòvsky, and myself, resolved accordingly to organise a rising among the Tchigirìn peasantry. Our plans failed, we ourselves were arrested, and the Tchigirìn trial instituted. See also Thun's *Geschichte der revolutionären Bewegung in Russland*, and Stepniak's *Underground Russia*.

[2] See note, p. 98.

[3] "White" terrorism was that practised by the Government for the intimidation of the revolutionists—wholesale arrests, banishment, imprisonment, death penalties, etc. "Red" terrorism was the answer of the revolutionists,—war waged against the Government and its representatives with pistol, knife, and bomb, also with the object of intimidation.—*Trans.*

for which they were only liable to comparatively light sentences), the Terrorists blew up a train on the Moscow line, believing the Tsar to be in it. In consequence of this the Government determined to revenge themselves upon the accused in the Gorinòvitch case. Of these only one had been directly implicated, and as all had been imprisoned two or three years already before the beginning of the terrorist agitation, they could under no circumstances be supposed answerable for that agitation. In spite of this it was decided to "make an example" by inflicting a heavy sentence. Three of the accused,—Drebyasghin, Malinka, and Maidansky—were condemned to death by hanging, and were executed on December 3rd; two—Kostyurin and Yankovski—were sentenced to penal servitude; and the traitors Krayev and Kuritzin were set free. If I had been in the power of these judges my fate would have been sealed. However, early in the year 1880 I effected my escape from Russia, and I had been living in Switzerland up to the time of my going to Freiburg as previously described. From all this it will be clear with what feelings I contemplated the possibility of extradition to Russia.

CHAPTER II

THE CAUSE OF MY ARREST—PROFESSOR THUN—MY DEFENCE—PLANS OF ESCAPE—MY LEGAL ADVISER

IN Germany, as a constitutional state, the law requires that no one shall be imprisoned for more than four-and-twenty hours without a magistrate's order. As a foreigner, however, this was not held to apply to me; and it was only after two days that I was brought before a magistrate.

After he had asked me the usual questions as to name, position, and antecedents, he informed me that being a foreigner whose identity could not be immediately established, I must remain in prison. He added that, of course, I could appeal against this decision, but that I should find it useless to do so. And, in fact, the appeal that I did make was rejected.

So after this examination I was as wise as ever regarding the cause of my arrest. Again, I began turning over and over my various conjectures. Uncertainty is always an unpleasant condition, and most prisoners have to endure it; but in my case uncertainty racked me with the most dreadful apprehensions. After three days that seemed endless, I was again taken before the magistrate. When the ordinary questions had been answered he asked me if I knew the reason of my arrest. On my reply in the negative he gave me the following explanation:—

Some days before my arrival from Basel two men had come from the same place, (my acquaintance, the Swiss Socialist, and the Pole Yablonski.) They also had put up

at the Freiburger Hof; they also had brought boxes filled with books. They had despatched those books to a man in Breslau, who had just been imprisoned under the law against Socialists; and in connection with his arrest the police had confiscated the parcel, in which were discovered Polish socialistic pamphlets prohibited in Germany. The senders having given the address of the Freiburger Hof, the pamphlets had been sent back to Freiburg, as a preliminary to the search for the persons who had despatched them. Orders were given at the hotel to inform the police if they or any other suspicious characters should arrive from Switzerland. Thus it was that the hotel porter, learning that I had books in my trunk, had, after consultation with the landlord, given information which led to the appearance of the police. The detective had found among my books the duplicate of one in the Breslau parcel—the *Calendar of the Narodnaia Volya;* and when he also discovered copies of the *Sozialdemokrat,* things were suspicious enough to warrant my arrest. The charge against me, therefore, was that in conjunction with other persons I was guilty of distributing prohibited Polish literature in Germany.

On hearing this, it was easy for me to reply to the charge that there was nothing in Polish among my books, nor any single book which had been prohibited in Germany; and as to the copies of the *Sozialdemokrat,* their possession was no offence. The question resolved itself simply into this: Whether I was in conspiracy with certain persons, and whether I had not in any case been circulating forbidden literature. Chance alone had led to my capture.

"If you had not gone to the Freiburger Hof nobody would have thought of arresting you," said Herr Leiblen, the magistrate.

My spirits rose on hearing this. I said to myself, "All is not lost yet. Perhaps everything will go off smoothly, and I shall soon be set free, if only the Russian Government is kept out of the game." That was the thought

which occupied me while the magistrate was writing out the protocol. He then said, pointing to a gentleman who sat at a table somewhat apart, "That is the interpreter who is assisting us in your case, a professor of our University."

During my examination I had once or twice looked round at this gentleman. He seemed known to me, and his presence caused me involuntary uneasiness.

"You can speak Russian with the Herr Professor," concluded Herr Leiblen, as he left the room to fetch some document.

"Do you not recognise me?" said the interpreter, turning round.

"Professor Thun!" cried I in great astonishment.

"What! am I so much altered that you didn't know me before?" he asked, and did not wait for my answer, but continued without pause, "How can I help you?"

"Do you know who I really am?" I asked, without replying, and a cold shudder ran through me.

"Yes; I know your true name. But there is no need for alarm. You have turned quite pale!"

His recognition had indeed given me no small fright. I had come to know Professor Thun about a year and a half before this time in Basel, whither I had then betaken myself in order that, being there at some distance from the colony of Russian refugees, I might be freer from interruptions to my studies than when surrounded by friends and acquaintances. I had matriculated in the Basel University, and was attending Professor Thun's lectures on political economy and statistics. Karl Moor, a leader of the Basel working-men, had introduced me personally to the professor, who supposed me to be simply a Russian student, not knowing me by my real name, but under the assumed one of Nicholas Kridner. He invited me to call on him, and confided to me his plan of writing a history of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Of this plan I had already heard, and it was partly this that had

attracted me to Basel. Professor Thun was a Rhinelander, had studied at Dorpat, and had then passed some years in the interior of Russia. He spoke Russian fluently, and was pretty well up in Russian affairs. When he found, in conversation with me, that I was not unacquainted with the Russian revolutionary movement, he suggested that I should help him in his work, to which of course I gladly assented; and thus it happened that we became rather intimate. In this way I learned Professor Thun's views regarding the Terrorists and their deeds. He condemned them ruthlessly; according to his convictions, it was the duty of all European governments to refuse such persons the right of asylum, and to deliver them over as ordinary criminals to the Russian authorities. In particular I had a lively recollection of the following occurrence. Professor Thun had given a lecture in the Basel "Freisinniges Verein," before a large audience, on "Two Episodes in the Russian Revolutionary Movement." These two episodes were the attempted assassination of Alexander II. and the Tchigirìn case. In speaking of the latter he related how Stefanòvitch, Bohanòvsky, and I had escaped from the fortress of Kiëv;[1] and he closed with the remark that these criminals were living in foreign parts, and had "unfortunately" not yet been captured. I had an opportunity afterwards of speaking to him on the subject, and gathered the impression that if he knew my real name Professor Thun would not only break off all connection with me, but under certain circumstances would even perhaps assist in my "capture." This led me to reduce my personal relations with him to a minimum, and besides I shortly afterwards left Basel.

Now here I was standing, a prisoner, before this man, and he knew who I really was! My feelings may be imagined.

"How do you know my name?" I asked, trembling with excitement.

[1] See note, p. 98.

"Your friend, Karl Moor, told me it in confidence after you had left Basel."

"And although you know who I am you offer me your help?" asked I in surprise.

"Yes. Only tell me how to help you, and I will do what I can."

I could scarcely grasp it, but one look in his eyes convinced me that I might trust him; it was that intuitive confidence that, once given, is unbounded.

"Thank you," said I. "Well, if I do not succeed in getting out of prison by lawful means, I shall try to escape. Would you stand by me then?"

"Certainly," said he simply and earnestly.

I still could hardly believe my ears. This German professor, whom I had heard publicly express his regret that the minions of Tsarism had not yet caught me—in other words, that I was not hanging on the gallows—this same man now offered me help to fly from a German prison! He gave me, however, undeniable proof of his sincerity. As translator he was in possession of all books, letters, etc., taken from me; he now produced my note-book, and advised me to tear out and destroy pages on which he had noticed addresses entered that might prejudice my cause. Of course, I immediately acted on his suggestion.

I then proposed to him that he should go to Basel without delay, tell my friend Axelrod what had occurred, instruct him what steps he could take to obtain my release by legal means, and finally, arrange with him some way of effecting my escape should the danger of extradition to Russia arise.

This task Professor Thun fulfilled to the letter; and during my imprisonment in Freiburg he did me many kind offices, running serious risk of thereby compromising his own position. He arranged secret meetings in Freiburg Cathedral with my friends, who had come in haste on the chance of being useful to me. He was also

the medium of both verbal and written communication between me and my comrades.

Having the right of free access to me, as the authorities placed full confidence in an illustrious professor, he often had me called into the translator's office, where we could chat undisturbed. In these conversations I saw how much he had taken my affairs to heart. He went so far as to offer his house as a refuge if I were obliged to attempt an escape. Sometimes he joked about the part he was playing:—"Look at me, now," he would say, laughing; "I, a German professor of dignity and position, have become a Russian conspirator; and this peaceful town of Freiburg is the scene of a plot!" Through his relations with the magistrate he knew how my case was going on, and of course he kept me posted up.

At the first hearing of my case I made the following statement:—I was a Russian student, and had come abroad in pursuit of my studies. I had married here, and had one child. Hitherto I had lived in Switzerland, but now I wished to remain in Freiburg, whither my wife, now in Zurich, was to follow me. I lived partly by literary work, partly on private means. In Switzerland I had attended the University as "hospitant" (an occasional student at lectures).[1] As for my political opinions, when I left Russia they were still somewhat undecided; but the influence of German literature had led me to join the Social Democrats, and I had determined to assist, as far as I could, in the propagating of their views in my own country.[2] When, for various reasons, I had determined to

[1] These particulars were necessary, because they applied to Bulgin, the friend from whom I had borrowed a passport for this journey, and whose name I always used when travelling. He really did live at Zurich with his wife and child, and attended the University there.

[2] This corresponded pretty nearly with fact. About a year previously, in 1883, Plehànov, Vera Zassoùlitch, Axelrod, and I had founded the Social-Democratic organisation—"The League for the Emancipation of Labour"; the object of which was to spread the doctrines of Marx in Russia, by means of translations and original writings. Some of the papers in my box were of this description, the firstfruits of our literary activity, which had just been printed by our private press established for the purpose.

live in Germany, I had brought with me the publications found in my possession, meaning to sell them eventually to the country people. They were not prohibited in Germany, and their possession was in no possible sense an infringement of German law. "And now," I concluded, "in a free German town, in Frei-Burg, I have been arrested with no legal justification, without any of the prescribed formalities, I am subjected to all manner of indignities, and clapped into gaol like a common malefactor. As if that were not enough, the police, with no shadow of excuse, seized upon and arrested a lady of this town as if she were a pickpocket or disturber of the peace. I may well ask, What difference is there between this constitutional state of the German Empire and the absolute despotism of Russia? No one could have been worse treated, even in Russia!"

These words seemed to make some impression on the magistrate. He walked up and down excitedly, while he dictated my statement to the clerk, assured me repeatedly of his sympathy, and asserted his keen disapproval of the way in which the police had behaved towards me and the young lady. At one point he muttered, "Still, as Othello says, 'The handkerchief, the handkerchief!'" Herr Leiblen appeared to be quite on my side, and Professor Thun told me later that he had declared the matter seemed to him harmless enough; in his opinion here was a perfectly innocent person being kept shut up in prison, and he hoped I should soon be set free. I had therefore a well-grounded hope of obtaining my release in due course; nevertheless doubts continued to arise, and thoughts of escape still haunted me. With some slight help from outside it would probably have been by no means difficult during these first days of my imprisonment.

One day, while I was still in this state of suspense betwixt hope and fear, I was called into the visitors' room. I expected to find Professor Thun there, and was surprised at being confronted by a man perfectly unknown

to me. He introduced himself by name (I cannot recollect it now), and informed me that he was a lawyer, who had been engaged by my friends to undertake my defence. He announced himself as a comrade, a member of the Social-Democratic party, and invited me to be quite open with him, as my friends had already told him everything concerning my past career. "You think of attempting to escape?" he asked in a whisper; and when I assented he continued quickly, "That would be a most fatal mistake. I have just seen the minutes of your case; the affair is going splendidly for you. I have no doubt you will soon be set at liberty. Why should you risk the dangers of a flight? If the attempt were to fail you would be in an infinitely worse position than now. I have been talking to the magistrate; he is convinced there is nothing of any significance against you. As soon as inquiries in Switzerland have elicited a satisfactory reply regarding your identity you will be released."

"But," I interposed, "supposing a simultaneous inquiry is set on foot in Russia?"

"There is no ground whatever for such a proceeding," replied the lawyer, "and if it were contemplated we should get to know it somehow. Germany is not Russia. With us legal proceedings are not secret. On the contrary, the law provides that your trial shall be held in public, and all documents relative to the case are without delay submitted to me as your counsel. In such documents mention would be made if an understanding with the Russian authorities were suggested. In our conduct of such cases it is absolutely out of the question that such a weighty complication should be kept private."

"Yes," I interrupted, "but how can you be sure that the police executive will not put the political and administrative authorities in communication with Russia?"

"The Government and the police would never combine in an affair of law without some announcement. You were arrested because there were grounds for supposing

you in relation with persons who had made themselves liable to prosecution by German law. If you are set free —as neither I nor the magistrate have the slightest doubt that you will be—you will be discharged unconditionally. There is nothing now to wait for but the establishment of your identity in Switzerland. You may rely on this. As a German lawyer I know all our legal methods; you, on the other hand, judge from Russian conditions, which are altogether different."

An inner voice said to me that the consistency of German law was not so entirely to be trusted; but I had no rational ground for demur, as German affairs of the kind were perfectly strange to me. And an attempt to escape, although it might have been easily managed in the first instance, became more risky as time went on. Though not quite abandoning the idea, these considerations led me to set it aside for the moment, till we had some proof of collaboration between the Russian and German Governments. Apparently such a step could not be hidden from me; and I had the well-known and influential Professor Thun on my side, who was on the best of terms with the authorities both of town and state. News must reach me through him if anything fresh were planned.

CHAPTER III

UNCERTAINTY—PRISON LIFE—THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR —A CHANGE OF CELLS

FOR some time longer I had to remain in the prison of Freiburg, vacillating between the expectation of speedy release and the dread of extradition. Every day I changed my mood a dozen, nay, a hundred times; and this everlasting alternation had a most depressing effect. The days dragged on, and seemed endless, although I tried to occupy myself by every possible device. I was well supplied with books—my comrades and Professor Thun saw to that—and I was accommodated with writing materials. So I read much, and tried to put on paper my thoughts, impressions, and recollections.

But it was not only uncertainty as to my own fate that worked on my spirits: anxiety about my friends, and about the further development of our "League for the Emancipation of Labour" troubled me. Our organisation was only in its infancy; we were but a small band, and our means scanty. In coming to Germany for the despatch of our first output over the Russian border, I had planned at the same time to arrange for future transport. On this account I had many duties to discharge, regarding not only money matters, but organisation. I had also left behind me in Switzerland much business that called for my return as soon as possible. All my comrades had their hands full; time was precious to them all. And now not only was I sitting here in prison, condemned to inaction, but all the other members of our League were

occupied with my affairs, and waiting about to see how they could help me. The consciousness of this check to our work, and of being its involuntary cause, oppressed me, and raised my impatience to the highest pitch.

My state can easily be pictured if one imagines a man who has an important and urgent affair to manage, and who suddenly breaks his leg, so that instead of pressing on to the goal he must lie inert on a sick-bed. But in that pitiable state he would be preoccupied with his physical suffering; and I, being free from pain, was given over entirely to worry and distress of mind.

The conditions of prison life left much to be desired. At first, particularly, I found them hard to bear, till by degrees I accustomed myself to German regulations. As I have already said, the cells were not lighted at night, and there was nothing for a prisoner to do but to sleep away the long hours of darkness, if he could. I afterwards learned that light was denied for fear of fire, and on the same ground smoking was forbidden. What there was to burn I could not imagine; for, except the doors, the window-frames, and the floors, there was no wood, the building being of massive stone.[1]

The irksomeness of the long evenings without light, and the prohibition of smoking, must for many people be not only a discomfort, but a hard penance. Yet there should have been no question of punishment in this prison, as only accused persons awaiting trial were detained there.

The behaviour of the prison officials towards the prisoners was anything but tender. For instance, this is what took place on one of my first days. Exercise in the prison yard was taken by all the inmates of one corridor at the same time. We were trotted round in a

[1] During my stay in Siberia, later, this fear of fire in the German prison was often brought to my mind. Thousands of prisoners, condemned to exile or to penal servitude, are there confined in wooden barracks, serving alike as prisons and as halting-places for convoys of exiles on the march. These buildings are always lighted, and the prisoners smoke quite calmly, without anyone thinking of danger from fire.

continual goose-step, always a certain number of paces distant each one from the other. One felt like a horse being led round the riding-school by a rope. I found that many prisoners regarded it as a humiliation, and preferred to forego the chance of fresh air. One day during this walk the military guard was being changed in the prison yard. The formalities of German drill were new to me, and involuntarily I stopped a moment to look, thus upsetting our beautiful order by not keeping at the correct distance between my preceder and follower; besides, perhaps I also dropped out of line an inch or so. Suddenly I felt someone seize me by the shoulder, abusing me violently. I scarcely knew what was happening till I found myself being raged at by the warder in my cell, whither he had whisked me off. The man was like one possessed, and threatened to deprive me of exercise if I behaved as I had done. At first I could not understand what frightful misdemeanour I had committed. When it dawned on me that all this was because of my momentary pause, it was my turn to show temper. I asked the man how he dared treat me so, informed him that prisoner though I was I would not permit anyone to knock me about or abuse me, and said that if such a harmless infringement of discipline was looked on as an offence against German prison rules, it was his plain duty to have warned me of the fact, and so on. This had its effect; the man's bearing instantly became milder, and thenceforward our intercourse was on the most peaceful footing.

The prison rations were quite insufficient; there was never enough to satisfy a full-grown man. If I remember rightly, they consisted of a pound and a half of rye bread daily, and twice in the day a little soup or gruel. Meat was only allowed twice a week in the first month, and that in microscopic portions. Even the gaolers admitted that unless a prisoner had means for providing himself with extra food, he would never get enough to eat.

The cells on the first floor, one of which I first inhabited, were roomy, bright, and clean. For furniture they were provided with a table, a stool, and a bed, the latter having a mattress, straw pillow, and woollen covering. In one corner of the room stood the stove, heated from the corridor and surrounded by an iron grating intended to prevent escape by the chimney. On the wall hung a copy of the regulations, whereby prisoners were informed of the various penalties for the slightest departure from the rules. All these rules were framed to spare the staff trouble, and to make the business of looking after the inmates as simple as possible. The interest of the inmates was not considered; they were not treated like people unconvicted of crime, but rather as malefactors deserving punishment, which the prison staff on their own responsibility had to see carried out in their own way. I will give an instance.

One day I was conducted from my cell to a corridor on the ground-floor, where a number of prisoners were already ranged along the wall, evidently awaiting something. I was directed to a place. I wanted to know what was happening; and after I had asked several times in vain, the gaoler told me that the Catholic priest had come, and wished to speak to all the prisoners, who would be taken to him one by one in order. I said that I was a Socialist and had nothing to do with Catholic or any other priests. I therefore begged to be taken back to my cell. This seemed to strike the man as irresistibly comic, and he burst into an ironic laugh.

"What you want or don't want is all the same to us. He wants to see you, and so you will be taken to him."

The warders who stood by were immensely tickled. They joked about the Russian barbarian who came to a German prison and expected to have his own opinions taken into account. So before the priest I went, but our conversation was of the shortest. To his question about my religion I answered that I was a Social Democrat, and

belonged to no Church. Whereupon, he looked at me compassionately and dismissed me.

Another disagreeable feature of life in this prison was the system of espionage. Often, when I was buried in my book or writing, a warder would suddenly appear. He would creep along on tiptoe to open the door noiselessly and spy round, probably designing to catch me if I were looking out of the window—a diversion strictly forbidden by the rules. Not only here, but in other German prisons that I have seen, the extravagant care with which the prisoners and their things were inspected was perfectly ridiculous. For instance, a dozen oranges sent me by my friends aroused the suspicions of the warders, and they conscientiously cut up every single orange into quarters to see if there were anything inside! So far as I know, even Russian gendarmes have never given one credit for contriving a hiding-place in an uncut orange or apple. The good people, however, do not achieve their purpose, in spite of all their cleverness. The "kassiber,"[1] or written message to or from prisoners, passes under their very noses. Nor had I ever any difficulty in getting forbidden articles conveyed into any German prison.

As I have said, the numerous petty formalities made me very impatient at first, but I accustomed myself at last more or less to German prison methods, and the officials dropped their over-zealous harshness towards me, and became more confidential. The fact that I was a foreigner, a Russian, rather interested them, as probably they had never even seen one before. And then, however incorruptible a German official may be, the possession of worldly resources cannot fail to influence him. The staff knew that I was in command of money. The chief inspector, a man named Roth, boarded me; and they knew I had everything that could mitigate the hardness of my lot, that my friends, in fact, supplied me with all

1 "Kassiber" Russian prison-slang.

sorts of little comforts and luxuries. This seemed to impress the prison staff, and I also was for ever telling them I should certainly be released very soon. I really almost believed it, and they seemed to do so, too—at any rate, for a time.

The staff consisted of three men—two warders and the chief inspector, who was also the governor of the gaol. All three often came to chat with me; they asked me questions about Russia, and on their side related much about German matters—prisons, laws, and other things in which they were interested. They all impressed me as being perfectly contented with their situations; indeed, their wages were comparatively high—up to 2,000 marks (£100) and more a year, if I am not mistaken. The warder with whom I had had the tiff recounted above paid me many visits. He, like the other two, had been a soldier, and was therefore imbued with notions of strict military discipline, which is the watchword throughout German prisons. Though in outward appearance hard and even forbidding, he was really a good-natured creature. Of his own initiative he asked me to let him have the remains of my meals, to take to a neighbouring prisoner who was poor and often went hungry through being unable to afford extra food. Of course I gladly consented. This warder was a big, powerfully-built man, aged about thirty, who had taken his present situation because he did not like his original trade—that of a joiner. Like most German workmen, he had only been to a *Volksschule* (public elementary school), but the instruction given there is far better than in similar schools in my own country; and in comparison with our workmen of like standing, he might be considered a highly intellectual person. We talked over all sorts of things—politics among the rest—and he told me he was a supporter of the existing Government—the National Liberals, I think. My own attainments caused him great admiration, especially my knowledge of French and German, as well as of my own mother-tongue.

The way they dealt with my money was a little odd. As I have said, the money in my pocket-book was taken possession of at the time of my arrest. Some days later the inspector presented me with an account of expenditure. It appeared that the police had been most generous on my behalf. A day's use of the room at the hotel, which I had barely seen, was paid for, and four or five marks in addition as "compensation for disturbance." Furthermore, as the good people had not been able to open my second box, although they had the key, they had paid a locksmith (very liberally too) to open it. Naturally I made no objection to the bill, but I felt somewhat amused at having to pay for the "disturbance" of my arrest, and the breaking open of my own trunk!

Soon after my imprisonment I was taken to a photographer's and photographed. I did not like this at all, as I feared that my portrait might be sent to Russia and recognised; but I could not make any protest, lest my reasons should be suspected. The photograph was needed for the inquiry in Switzerland, that by means of it I might be identified as Bullgin. The Swiss authorities certified that it did represent Bullgin, with whose passport I always travelled; so that part of the inquiry was got through safely. Also, the proofs I adduced of my not being implicated in the doings of Yablonski and his friend were accepted, and it was agreed that I had neither circulated forbidden literature nor had had any in my possession. Weeks passed away before these formalities were accomplished, and at last, nearly two months after my arrest, the magistrate informed me that he should close the affair in a few days, and that he himself was satisfied there were no grounds for my prosecution. The decision lay with the Public Prosecutor,[1] who might concur

[1] This term is the nearest English equivalent to the German *Staatsanwalt*, a functionary attached to every court of law. A corresponding official exists in Russia, with a colleague, the Public Advocate, who undertakes the defence of any prisoner unable or unwilling to employ a counsel of his own.—*Trans.*

in this, and so release me at once; or he might after all think fit to take the matter into court. In the latter event, however, the judge would most probably uphold the finding of the magistrate; and even if against all expectation a prosecution should be set up and a penalty enforced, the sentence would be such as my term of imprisonment here would be held to fulfil. In any case I might be certain my release was now only a question of days. It seemed absurd to distrust this forecast, and it is but natural to expect what one ardently desires; so I began to feel easy.

Some days after I was again sent for to the visitors' room, where I found Frau Axelrod and a grey-haired gentleman, the Public Prosecutor, Von Berg. In stern tones he informed us that we were at liberty to converse, but only in German; at the first Russian word he would separate us. This precaution, and the whole behaviour of the grim old gentleman, did not quite bear out the idea of speedy release for me; and knowing him to be acquainted with the magistrate's views, I wondered what his reasons were, but I was not apprehensive. Frau Axelrod and I did not find much to say to each other under this supervision, and our interview was brief.

I remember the next few days very well. On the morrow the inspector, Roth, came and told me, in a most cheerful and friendly way, that I must change over into a cell on the ground-floor, as the one in which I was had to be renovated. He was quite apologetic, regretting that the other cell would not be so comfortable for me. This change did not please me at all. My plans of escape had all been based on the situation of my cell, and its being on the first floor would have been no impediment. One of my friends had hired a room in the opposite house, towards which the window of my cell looked, so that at a pinch we could communicate by prearranged signals. Besides these reasons of business, so to speak, on other grounds I was sorry to quit my now familiar

quarters. My associations with these four walls were not all unpleasant, and looking out of the window had been my greatest distraction. On market days many lively scenes were enacted between buyers and sellers—peasants of the district. Sometimes military exercises took place in the square, and the unfamiliar drill interested me. But above all I loved to climb up to the window in the evenings to watch the children, who, when twilight came on, always romped about the square, playing all sorts of games. Their merry laughter and shouting took me back to my home in South Russia and my own childish days...

All this came to an end with my change of lodging. My new cell was dark, less roomy, and the window looked into the yard. This latter circumstance made escape well-nigh impossible. I comforted myself with the thought that the idea of flight was needless, and tried to reckon how many days were likely to elapse before my release. I argued that my transfer to another cell was probably in view of my departure, or else a mere chance, necessary for the reason given me by the warder. But my friends took it quite otherwise when they saw me no more at the window, and thought I must be already on my way to Russia!

CHAPTER IV

THE VISIT OF "MY WIFE"—MORE PLANS OF ESCAPE—THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR SHOWS HIS HAND—PREPARATIONS FOR A JOURNEY

ON one of the following days I was told there was someone to see me. No sooner had I crossed the threshold of the visitors' room than a young lady threw herself, laughing and weeping, into my arms. It was Frau Bullgin. As I was in prison under her husband's name, she had now come to play the part of my wife; and so well did she play it as even to soften the heart of the Public Prosecutor, who witnessed this moving scene of meeting between such a young and loving pair. He left us alone for a moment, and only when the first emotional greetings were over did he warn us that we must speak German; but his tone was less stern and dry than at my first encounter with him, when Frau Axelrod was there. Frau Bullgin had at once whispered to me that I must somehow contrive that we should speak Russian, as she had important things to talk about. I therefore begged Herr von Berg to let us speak in our own language.

"I cannot," he said shortly; "you both seem able to speak German quite well enough to understand one another."

"You must allow," said I, "that however well a man speaks a foreign tongue, when he meets his wife after weeks of imprisonment and in circumstances like mine, he wants to speak freely. We cannot talk of family affairs in German. But," I continued, "if you insist about

this, though I cannot understand by what law nor for what reason, could you not let Professor Thun be present as he would understand all we said in Russian?"

After some further demur he at last relented so far as to say that though he would not request Professor Thun's attendance himself, not being in any way bound to do so, yet if the professor chose to do us such a favour, we might then be permitted to speak Russian. Of course I would not betray my relations with Professor Thun, so I carefully inquired his address, that my wife might take him a message.

"Your wife shall be given it in my office," said Herr von Berg. So he and Frau Bullgin departed, and I was taken back to my cell.

After a short interval I was sent for again, and found Professor Thun with the others. I had not seen him for some time, as he had been away for his Easter holidays; besides, his official duties as translator had come to an end, and my case being now in the hands of the Public Prosecutor, he had not the same freedom of access to me. Frau Bullgin told me that she had hurried hither because of the great anxiety felt about me by my comrades. Russian spies were closely watching all my friends and acquaintances in Geneva; showing my photograph (which of course strongly resembled that sent from Freiburg by the police), and asking where I was. From this my friends concluded that the Russian Government was already on my track; they feared that if my imprisonment lasted much longer my real identity would certainly be discovered, and they therefore begged me to try and effect my escape. We talked over every chance, and tried to work out a plan, Professor Thun taking the warmest interest, and making many suggestions. But, as I said before, absolutely no plans were feasible from the cell I was in now; and I will not trouble to describe those we discussed, except to repeat that Professor Thun played an important part in them all, even undertaking to provide

me with a key to the outer door of the prison. The personal risk he was willing to accept, or even court, was great; yet this was the man who had at one time avowed his desire of handing me over to Russian justice! After eighteen years it is scarcely comprehensible to me, spite of my lively recollection of his kindness and sympathy.

The Public Prosecutor, Von Berg, who remained in the room during all this confabulation, played rather a comical part. Of course, he understood not a word, as we spoke Russian; but whenever we laughed he smiled indulgently, as if amused at us. I cannot imagine what would have been the feelings of this painfully correct and stern old gentleman if he had known the chief cause of our merriment, which was simply that we had to concoct the report of our conversation with which Professor Thun was subsequently to regale his worship.

When we had finished our consultations, which lasted rather a long time, Frau Bulìgin took a very tender farewell of me. She thanked Von Berg for having allowed us to speak Russian, and asked him how soon he thought I should be released. I think he told her that he believed the case would be concluded in a few days, mentioning the date. In any case, he added, if I were set free I should be handed over to the police to be conducted over whatever frontier was convenient—the Swiss, he supposed, being the nearest.

I held fast to the hope that it really would be so, and tried to stifle the doubts that persisted in rising. It was certainly pleasanter to dream of prospective freedom, than to brood over the consequences of extradition to Russia, or even of being set over the Russian border. The sight of Frau Bulìgin had aroused keen longings for liberty; fancy painted joyful pictures, my thoughts dwelt on my friends and my work. Mentally I lived through many scenes of welcome, and saw our circle setting to work with redoubled energy at our "League for the Emancipation of Labour." I planned out to the smallest detail how I

would make up for my enforced idleness. I lived only in the future, and looked on the dreary present as if it were a long-vanished past, a disagreeable episode that I and mine could talk over as far behind us.

"To-day the order for my release will be made out." I remember how I awoke on a certain May morning with this thought in my mind, and instantly began to conjecture in what manner the announcement would be made to me.

"You are to go to the Public Prosecutor," said the warder, breaking in on my visions.

"It is for my formal discharge," was my first thought; "the man is keeping his word. Strange that the judge has been so quick in pronouncing his decision; it is still quite early," I meditated, as I went along the corridor.

In the office sat Herr von Berg at a table; beside him was a young clerk, and the table was covered with bundles of documents.

"To-day, as you are aware," said the Public Prosecutor, turning to me, "judgment was to be given on your case. Before I inform you of the verdict, I must again have your assurance that your name is Bulïgin, and your home Moscow."

"Certainly. I am Bulïgin, of Moscow," I answered.

"Read the document relating to that point," said the Public Prosecutor to the clerk. The latter read aloud in dry, business-like tones a communication, apparently emanating from some Moscow official, stating curtly that there was no person of the name of Bulïgin answering to the description given.[1]

"What have you to say to this?" asked Herr von Berg coldly.

I felt that the blood had left my cheeks, and that my knees were trembling; but I pulled myself together at

[1] This was true. The passport was forged, and my comrade who travelled with it bore another name in Russia.

once, and began to defend myself, speaking rapidly, warmly, and earnestly.

I saw my critical situation, and felt the ground slipping from under my feet. My fear of communications with the Russian Government was justified, and it was now a fight for life. I had so often dreaded this eventuality, that my plan of defence was prepared.

"Listen!" I cried. "I declare to you that I am Buligin; but I confess that I do not come from Moscow, and that the other particulars I gave you about myself were false. This amount of deception was forced upon me, foreseeing as I did the course that might be taken by the authorities here, and knowing too well what Russian methods are. *You* do not know those methods, and I must explain. It often happens that people are denounced to the gendarmerie for having a prohibited book in their possession. Not only are they themselves arrested, but everyone who has consorted with them is liable to arrest, and anyone whose address is found in their rooms. Their houses are watched, and everyone who visits them is seized. Whole families are persecuted in this way, and think themselves lucky if they get off at last after untold annoyance. Quite innocent people are often in prison for months. When I came from democratic Switzerland to constitutional Germany, with no intention of contravening German law, little did I expect to meet with an experience which shows me that, at any rate as regards foreigners, there is not much to choose between Germany and Russia in some of their dealings. I find to my cost that without any legal formalities the police may arrest and imprison whom they choose; that they can make a domiciliary search without a warrant, and may treat a harmless traveller as if he were a criminal. I was kept in gaol for two days without being brought before a magistrate; I saw a young lady seized in the street and brought to the prison, just as if in Russia. What ground had I for trusting the magistrate's assurance that there

would only be an ordinary judicial inquiry? I took it for granted that the police, as with us in Russia, could override the administrators of the law, and that the police would be in correspondence with the Russian authorities. This document proves that I was right.

"Well, then, if I had given the true facts about myself, the police, as is evident, would have handed them on to their Russian *confrères*, who, of course, when they heard I had been arrested here because I had two boxes of books forbidden in Russia, (though not in Germany,) would have started their usual game in the town whence I really come. My people would have been subjected to annoyance; my brothers and sisters, who share my views, would perhaps have been found possessed of forbidden literature, and clapped into gaol along with many others. Russia is not a constitutional country, and therefore I was obliged to guard myself by suppressing particulars here that might have been used against my friends there."

"You assert, then," said the Public Prosecutor scornfully, "that you are Buligin, but that you do not come from Moscow; and you refuse to give the name of your native place?"

"Yes, I refuse for the reasons I have stated."

"Read the next report," said Herr von Berg, and the clerk read aloud:—

"The prisoner now in the State prison of Freiburg, calling himself Bulìgin, is in reality Leo Deutsch, who in May, 1876, attempted—in conjunction with Jakob Stefanòvitch—to murder Nicholas Gorinòvitch. Therefore the Government of His Majesty the Emperor of Russia, through their representative in the dominions of His Highness the Grand Duke of Baden, demand the extradition of both the aforesaid persons. And at the same time His Majesty's Government consider themselves bound to draw the attention of the German authorities to the fact that the aforesaid Leo Deutsch has several times

already broken out of prison, and should therefore be most jealously watched, both during his incarceration and while being transported to Russia."

I have transcribed this document almost literally, for though nearly two decades have passed since that moment, it seems present to me this day. "It's all up with me," I thought, and torturing visions rose before me.

"What reply have you to make?" I heard the dry question of the Public Prosecutor, and saw his malicious smile of triumph.

With a tremendous effort I collected myself.

"What I have just heard read," I said as calmly as I could, "scarcely surprises me. It bears out all I have been told as to the methods of the Russian Government. Their game is clear. When they want to get hold of a harmless Russian Socialist who has been arrested in a constitutional country they will not allow that he is the person he claims to be, but give him the name of someone implicated in a serious crime. This is nothing new. For example, Rumania was induced in this way to deliver up a certain Katz, who was then immediately exiled to Siberia by 'administrative methods,' as is said in Russia, that is, without any judicial process. Evidently they are doing just the same in my case. The best proof of this lies in this document itself. You see there that the Government not only demands the extradition of Deutsch, but also of Stefanòvitch, although the latter was long ago arrested in Russia and sent to penal servitude in the Siberian mines, and although his complicity in the attempt against Gorinòvitch never came into question at his trial. It is plain that the extradition of Stefanòvitch is asked for in order that on the next opportunity some peaceful Socialist may be claimed as being he. What I am telling you would be confirmed by Professor Thun, who not only is acquainted with Russian ways, but has particularly studied our revolutionary movement."

This ended the interview. When I was back in my cell,

and could collect my thoughts, I felt completely crushed. My extradition seemed certain, and escape my only hope. But that this hope was futile I quickly discovered. Following the Russian Government's warning as to my having often broken out of prison before (as a matter of fact I had done so twice),[1] a special warder was now posted at my door, with instructions not to stir from the spot, and to watch my every movement. The other warders also were told to keep an eye on me, and—what had never happened before—the chief inspector, Roth, had been present at the interview described above.

Soon after midday I was again taken before the Public Prosecutor. This time he seemed more graciously inclined, and treated me with as near an approach to geniality as could be expected from such an arid man of law. He informed me that Professor Thun had endorsed my description of Russian judicial proceedings; and he then continued, "It is possible that an injustice is being done you in ascribing to you the crime spoken of in the communication of the Russian Government, and I am prepared to assist you in defending yourself. You must understand that in Germany it is no part of a Public Prosecutor's duties to pass sentence, but he has to get at the truth, and to discharge persons who are unjustly accused. Give me any particulars that would tend to exonerate you, and I will do what I can for you."

This change in the behaviour of the Public Prosecutor was evidently owing to Professor Thun's influence. I knew quite well that there was not much left to hope for now, but I saw I should try to make use of Herr von Berg's more favourable attitude to gain a little time. If my extradition could be delayed I might yet find some opportunity of escape. So I gratefully accepted the Public Prosecutor's offer, and begged him to let me have an opportunity of consultation with my lawyer and the official translator, as I myself had no acquaintance with

[1] See pp. 86 and 98.

the forms of German law. Meanwhile, I said, I could tell him at once how I hoped to prove I was not Deutsch; I had reason to believe that he was in London, and if my friends there could find him, he would no doubt be quite willing to give his testimony in my behalf. (I was hoping, with the help of Professor Thun, to arrange that one of the Russian refugees in London should play the part of Deutsch, *i.e.* of myself.)

Herr von Berg informed me that the granting of this request lay with the Minister of Justice, to whom he would apply; and with this our interview terminated.

Events now took on a lively pace. Before this I had sometimes had weeks to wait between the acts of my drama, and had often longed for the next hearing, that I might at least know what was going on. Now, however, things went faster than I cared for. The next day I was again called before the Public Prosecutor. This time, with Herr von Berg, his clerk, and inspector Roth, who stood sentinel at the door, I found a man, strange to me, dressed in the uniform of a Russian officer of justice, with a glittering order in his buttonhole.

"Good morning, Deutsch! Don't you know me?" asked the unknown in Russian, with an agreeable smile. "I am the Deputy Public Prosecutor in the Petersburg Court of Appeal. My name is Bogdanòvitch, and you must remember me, for I was Deputy Public Prosecutor in Kiëv when you were a prisoner there."

"I have never been in prison at Kiëv; and I have not the pleasure of knowing you," I answered quietly. And indeed I had never set eyes on the gentleman before.

"There is no doubt about it, he is Deutsch," said Bogdanòvitch, turning to his German colleagues.

"And I declare that I am not," said I.

"We prefer to believe Herr von Bogdanòvitch," said Herr von Berg. "You shall go back to Russia."

"Then this is what you are doing," cried I, "you are

giving the Russian Government another opportunity of banishing an innocent man to Siberia."

"We never send innocent people to Siberia," said Bogdanòvitch promptly.

"You not only send them to Siberia, but to the scaffold," I cried. "You say that you belonged to the staff of the Kiëv law courts; then you must have heard of the judicial murder of an innocent boy, the student Rozòvsky, which took place there. Perhaps you were concerned in the case. He was hanged, in spite of the fact that the judge himself allowed his only offence to lie in the possession of a proclamation, the authors of which he refused to name."[1]

"Rozòvsky was not executed solely on that account," said Bogdanòvitch, smiling at the Public Prosecutor, "but because he belonged to the Socialist party."

"You see!" I cried, turning to Herr von Berg, "in Germany members of the Socialist party sit in the Reichstag, and take part in your legislation; but according to the views of a Russian law-officer, and of the Russian Government, mere suspicion of being a Socialist, let alone proof, is enough to send one to the gallows!"

The two gentlemen could not easily answer this, and on the German lawyer it seemed to make a distinct impression. I saw, however, that the self-important Herr von Berg found the presence of the Deputy Public Prosecutor from the Petersburg Appeal Courts rather imposing. From time to time his glance rested on the glittering order worn by the official; in addressing the Russian his voice took on an affability hitherto strange to it; and his painful efforts to pronounce the difficult name correctly were really comic. Apparently in order to show off his own importance and zeal to the stranger, he remarked to me severely—

"I see that you are not backward in finding excuses, and for this reason are trying to paint the Government of your country in the most lurid colours. But whatever

[1] Rozòvsky was executed early in the year 1880.

you may think of it, it is to that Government you must be surrendered, and I am convinced you will be treated in Russia with all legal equity."

"Oh, certainly, certainly!" Bogdanòvitch hastened to assure him.

I was led back to my cell, and what I suffered in mind during the next few days I need not describe; the reader can well imagine it. It was clear to me that all hope of release was gone; yet I could not resign myself to the thought, and my brain was always busy with plans of rescue. I counted on the time that must necessarily be absorbed in making out the terms of my extradition, and concocted a long letter of conspiracy to my friends, hoping to forward it through Professor Thun. Two or three days went by before I could get it finished; and meanwhile I was again called before the Public Prosecutor, although the day was Sunday. Evidently things were being hurried on.

"The Government have decided to deliver you up to Russia," he began, "but on this condition: that you shall be brought before a regular tribunal, and only prosecuted on the count of the Gorinòvitch case.[1] Your request for an interview with your lawyer and the interpreter is refused."

After he had read me the decision of the Baden Government, Herr von Berg informed me that I was to start for Russia that very day. As I left him I remarked that I should certainly be sent before a special court and judged by martial law.

"That is quite impossible," was his rejoinder; "it would be a contravention of the treaty and contrary to international law."

Once alone in my cell, I began preparations for my

[1] The object of the treaty was to ensure the trial of the case in the ordinary criminal courts. The Russian Government's practice, in dealing with "politicals," was to subject them to martial law, and so obtain heavier sentences; *e.g.* capital punishment, which is not inflicted at all under the Russian civil code.—*Trans.*

journey. These were not so simple as might be supposed. Notwithstanding the excessive care with which everything sent me by my friends was inspected, I had become possessed of an English file for cutting through iron gratings, a pair of scissors to cut my hair and beard in case of need, and also money in German and Russian banknotes. I had to dispose of these things somehow. The file I decided to part with, as it was now hardly likely to be of any use, and would be hard to conceal; so I broke it in two and threw it down the waste-pipe of the closet. The other things I managed to secrete in such a manner that I should be able to avail myself of them if I had occasion on the journey. The warder at the cell-door never let me out of his sight; yet I managed to hide them in my clothes so that there was a chance of their escaping the searchers. All this was like the drowning man's clutch at a straw. I did not deceive myself as to the strict watch to which I should be subjected, and the futility of any hope of speedy rescue. But in such circumstances even useless precautions serve at least to distract one's thoughts, and my thoughts were not of the pleasantest. I knew what was before me, and pictured my future. Long, long years of prison! It was almost more bearable to think of death than of that living grave.

"Of what use would my life be?" I asked myself; and the answer was devoid of consolation.

CHAPTER V

THE JOURNEY TO RUSSIA—IN THE CATTLE-TRUCK—THE FRANKFORT AND BERLIN PRISONS—THE FRONTIER-STATION—THROUGH WARSAW TO PETERSBURG

WHEN evening came I was sent off in a closed carriage, accompanied by two policemen in plain clothes, who had been enjoined to use all possible vigilance. The carriage was stopped at a branch of the railway line some distance from the station, and here my companions and I were put into an ordinary cattle-truck. As this truck was brought into the station, where it was attached to a passenger train, I observed an unusual commotion on the platform, and my guards, who noticed it too, whispered together excitedly. From chance words that I caught I gathered that an arrest was being made, and wondered if it could have anything to do with me. Years afterwards I learned that it was indeed two of my comrades who were seized on the platform at Freiburg, they having hoped to travel by my train and be at hand to assist me if I could attempt an escape. But this was another fiasco. My two friends were kept some days in prison in Freiburg, and then sent back to Switzerland.

Towards morning we arrived at Frankfurt-am-Main, where for some reason or other I was again put in prison. The governor of this gaol made a great show of kindness and consideration towards me, but had his own reasons for such tactics, as will subsequently appear. When I asked if I might write a post card to my friends in Switzerland, he assured me most obligingly that it should be forwarded

at once, and furnished me with writing materials. (Later I found that he had handed over the card to my guards, who sent it to the Russian authorities; but, of course, it only contained a few words of greeting.)

The cell to which he conducted me was very comfortable, and looked out on a lively street; but he posted two policemen in the room to keep watch over me. He then provided me with an excellent luncheon—or at least it seemed very good to me, as during the last day or two excitement had kept me from eating. Seeing that the journey threatened to be tedious, I wanted to get some books, and the obliging governor offered to buy them for me at a second-hand shop, where they would be cheap. I remember choosing a few German and French classics, which he procured for me at what I thought a reasonable price. Finally, he invited me to go for a walk in the yard with him.

As soon as we were alone he began giving me a very prolix account of all his experiences, and then suddenly asked me point-blank if I were not really the famous Degàiev.[1]

I could not help laughing heartily: the assiduous friendliness of this worthy, who, as a matter of fact, was always looking out for his own advancement, appeared now in

[1] Degàiev, a captain of artillery, was a prominent member of the "Narodnaia Vòlya." Arrested and imprisoned in the beginning of 1880, he soon turned informer, and betrayed many of his former comrades. By this he not only gained his liberty, but also won the confidence of the notorious persecutor of revolutionists, Colonel Soudyèhkin, commander of the Petersburg *Ochrana* (a body of secret police). Pangs of conscience, or fear of the vengeance of the revolutionists, caused him to make a full confession to them in 1883, and as amends for his treachery he offered to stand by them in an attempt to assassinate Soudyèhkin. The latter was difficult to entrap, being extraordinarily clever and wary; owing to which qualities he had done more harm to the revolutionists than anybody else. Degàiev's proposal was accepted; and in the winter of 1883 he managed to decoy Soudyèhkin, under pretext of important business, into his house, where two revolutionists were lying in wait, and shot Soudyèhkin down. They were both caught, condemned to penal servitude for life, and imprisoned in the Schlüsselburg fortress. Degàiev escaped to foreign parts, and afterwards disappeared.

quite a new light. Apart from the fact that (as I heard afterwards from the policemen in my cell) he drew a considerable profit, not only from my food, but even on the books he got me, he also had his eye on the reward he would receive if he could induce me to confess to being Degàiev. The Russian Government had put a price of 10,000 roubles on that man's head, and his name was in every European newspaper.

I stayed in this prison until nightfall, when I was fetched away by three policemen in plain clothes. Every time that my guards were changed I was searched, but nothing was found. Before starting on our journey, the Frankfort police put chains on me, not heavy or thick, and quite inconspicuous, as they were attached under my clothes; but they hindered any quick movement, and of course made running impossible. I protested vehemently against this indignity; but they declared they had received special instructions, and had no choice in the matter, so I had to submit. Even this was not their final precaution. When we passed on to the railway platform, one man, a giant in stature, took me by the arm in a friendly way; another went a few steps in front, and the third came a little behind, so that we must have appeared to the uninitiated like a trio of boon companions. We installed ourselves in a carriage among the ordinary travellers, and it probably never dawned on any of them that they were sitting cheek by jowl with a fettered prisoner. I could not help thinking of the proverb used by our Russian peasants to describe German ingenuity:—"The Germans are too clever for anything; they've even invented apes!" I must say that my guardians behaved very civilly to me, although with formal strictness. So far as their orders permitted, they showed me many little kindnesses. In the *Begleitschein* with which I was given into their custody I was entered as "the so-called Bullgin," and by this name I went until I was handed over to the Russians.

There was no thinking of escape on this journey. My escort never let me out of their sight for a second, never stirred from my side, and watched my slightest movements. They did not enter into conversation with me, nor had I any inclination to gossip with them. I felt heavy at heart, enervated, and exhausted. My mind seemed dormant, nothing attracted my attention during the whole journey; I seemed to hear and see nothing that went on around me, but to lie wrapped in a dreary apathy. "What must be must be," I said to myself, if a thought of the future arose. Reaction had set in after the painful excitement of the last days in Freiburg.

The following day we arrived in Berlin, where I was at once taken to prison. Which prison it was I do not know, but I remember what a gloomy impression it produced upon me. The dark cell, (into which no direct light could penetrate owing to the high wall opposite the window,) and the sour-faced warders, who never seemed to look one straight in the eyes, forced on me the thought that people who were compelled to inhabit this place for long were much to be pitied. I have made acquaintance with many prisons, both in Russia and Western Europe, but never felt so thoroughly despondent as in this Berlin gaol. Everything seemed intended to make one feel: "You are in Berlin, the capital of military Prussia, where inflexible rule and iron discipline are the watchwords applying to the smallest detail."

The policemen who had brought me from Frankfort never left me alone even in my prison cell, keeping watch over me by turns. And I must say that I was glad of this. Their company was not exactly enlivening, but the presence of another human being mitigated the dreariness of the prison atmosphere. Fortunately I was not detained here long, and I was truly thankful when evening came, and I was once more on my travels, attended by the same escort. Next morning we were in Russia.

The frontier station where I was to be delivered over to the Russian authorities is called Granitza, a place where three empires meet—Germany, Austria, and Russia. As I was to be taken straight on to Petersburg, this was a very roundabout way to have come, and I suppose it must have been chosen from fear of a rescue being attempted at the frontier. This is the more likely, as shortly before the Polish Socialist, Stanislas Mendelssohn, had—aided by his friends—escaped from the Prussian police at another frontier station (Alexandrovo, I think), just as his surrender to the Russians was to be effected. He got safe through to Switzerland.

I remember my sensations well. It was a lovely May morning, and the sunshine gave me renewed strength. I had scarcely descended from the train with my German guards, when I was surrounded by a crowd of Russian gendarmes.

"Good morning, Deutsch! good morning, sir! Here you are at last! We have been expecting you for ever so long!" were their greetings. I saw round me the fresh, smiling faces of young Russian peasant lads, surmounting the hated dark blue uniform. Their free, familiar bearing made me smile back at them as if old friends were welcoming me.

"How do you know me?" I asked them, as we went towards the gendarmes' quarters.

"Oh, of course we know you; we've heard such a lot about you!" cried several. "Will you come and have some tea at once, or brush the dust off first?" they asked, and vied with each other in doing the agreeable and making me at home. It was a curious contrast to the manners of my German guards. The Russians were frank and simple; there was something of even friendly confidence in their behaviour. To the German police I was a dangerous criminal, who went about under false names. They had their orders, and followed them rigidly, not troubling themselves with anything beyond that, hoping

thereby to gain a reward (as I gathered from their whispered talk when they supposed me asleep). To the Russian gendarmes,[1] who never have anything to do with common criminals, I was a "political offender," a "State prisoner" (as we call it), whose name they had heard so often that they looked on me quite as an old acquaintance I had not been in Russia for four years, and the first persons I met from whom I heard my mother tongue were gendarmes. The reader will be able to understand my mingled feelings. Any uninitiated person glancing into the room where I sat before the steaming samovar, refreshing myself with tea, and gossiping with the gendarmes standing round, might have thought we were a party of old friends enjoying a cosy chat.

"Well, what's it like in foreign parts?—not so nice as here, eh?" asked the lads; and I related how in "foreign parts" it was ever so much nicer than at home, in many ways. But that they would not allow to be possible, and we disputed about it, till at last everyone present, ten or twelve men, were all talking at once. When this topic was exhausted I asked what was the news at home, what was happening? They then described excitedly how all Russia had just been celebrating the majority of the heir-apparent, the present Tsar.

The German police having fulfilled their commission and handed me over with bag and baggage, had departed, probably somewhat disappointed, for no reward had been given them—in Granitza, at least. After some hours an officer of the gendarmerie appeared, and commanded some of the men to be ready to escort me, as I was to go on by the next train. I saw that he gave over to one of them the money that had been taken from me by the German police. Unobserved, I immediately drew out the Russian money I had concealed about me, and then handed it to the officer, for I feared it might be discovered if I were carefully searched. He was greatly

[1] See preface.—*Trans.*

surprised, and asked if I had never been searched in Germany. He then ordered me to be searched again, which was done with every care; but all the same, the rest of my German money and the scissors were not found.

Three gendarmes accompanied me on the journey to Petersburg. In Warsaw, where we arrived during the night, a colonel of gendarmerie was awaiting me. Like most of his kind, he was very polite and ready to converse.

"You were concerned in the Tchigirin case?" he began; and when I assented, he continued confidentially, "Ah, that was a long while ago. Wasn't it at the time of the Polish rising? Well, then, you will have the benefit of the coronation amnesty; they won't have much against you."

At the time of the Polish insurrection, in 1863, I was only eight years old. This is an illustration of how much many of the officers of gendarmerie know about the political trials which are supposed to be their own special business. This friendly sympathy did not prevent him, of course, from giving my escort the strictest orders about my treatment, as I could hear when seated in the carriage. "Be sure you don't fall asleep!" he whispered. The gendarmes, however, did not allow this to trouble their minds much, but continued to treat me in a very easy-going fashion, and did not manifest any fear of my running away.

When we arrived in Petersburg a captain of gendarmerie met us, and took me at once in a closed carriage to the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

CHAPTER VI

THE FORTRESS OF PETER AND PAUL — THE PUBLIC PROSECUTOR AS COMPATRIOT — A HARD-HEARTED DOCTOR—A FLEETING ACQUAINTANCE

A STRANGE feeling came over me when I saw that I was being conveyed to this prison, used by the Government of the Tsars for political offenders only; a place never spoken of in Russia without a shudder. I approached it with dark forebodings, but these gave place to interest. I knew well that a cruel severity ruled in this place, but I could not help being curious to experience it personally. The reality fully answered to my expectations.

I was taken at once to a room where the governor of the prison, Colonel Lesnik of the gendarmerie, ordered me to strip to the skin. A couple of gendarmes examined me carefully, and then gave me, instead of my own clothes, prison under-linen, a striped cotton gown, such as is worn in hospitals, and a pair of slippers. My own clothes and other things were taken away. I was then shut up in a cell on the ground floor.

Everything goes on here in utter silence; not a word is heard, the stillness is intense. No one could imagine that men lived here year after year; it felt like a house of the dead. Only the chimes of the clock broke upon the ear, sounding out every quarter of an hour the national hymn, "How glorious is our Lord in Zion!"

The cell was large, but dark, as the window was high up in the wall. It was cold, despite the May weather,

for the sunshine never entered here, and the walls were damp. Besides the iron bedstead with its straw mattress, pillow, and thin woollen covering, there were an iron table and a stool, both chained to the wall, and the customary evil-smelling tub. Even at three o'clock in the afternoon darkness reigned, although at this season Petersburg enjoys its "bright nights," when it never gets really dark. Reading was not to be thought of. Above everything I was sensible of the extreme cold, partly due to the situation of the cell, but chiefly to the insufficiency of my clothing. To warm myself I marched up and down from one corner to the other till I was tired; but hardly had I sat down a minute than I began to freeze again all over. Even in bed I felt the same penetrating cold, for the blanket was very thin.

My rations consisted of about two pounds of black bread, and for dinner at midday two dishes, which were not bad, but insufficient in quantity—always half cold, moreover, as all the food had to be brought a long way. As an unconvicted prisoner I could have provided myself with better accommodation at my own expense; but that was impossible at first, because the gendarmes who brought me had given over my luggage and my money to the officer of gendarmerie, and he had delivered it to the Central Department of the State Police. The worst of this was that it meant the loss of my spectacles, and therefore I could not read, another privilege to which I had a right, as an unconvicted prisoner. This made the days, and the nights too, seem interminable. I did everything I could think of to occupy myself. I tried arithmetical problems, of course in my head, for writing materials were not allowed; I related my own history as an exercise of memory; and at last I hit on the plan of "publishing" a newspaper. When I had got through washing and dressing in the morning, I ate a piece of bread, and then "read my paper." First came a leading article on some question of the day, then the summary

of news, gossip of the town, notes, etc. After some days, of course, my "copy" began to run short, and the contents of my journal became very uninteresting. The reading of it could not occupy the whole day, and I was often, too, kept awake at night by the cold; so I filled in my time by running up and down, up and down, like a beast in its cage.

Outdoor exercise brought little relief from the eternal solitude; it was only taken every other day, and lasted a very short while. The time allowed was but a quarter of an hour, including dressing and undressing, my own clothes being brought to me for these occasions. My walks took place in a yard enclosed with high walls, where no one was to be seen but gendarmes and sentries. The slightest attempt to converse with them was forbidden, or even that they should answer the simplest question. If one asked anything they stared straight in one's face and were dumb.

After some days, however, an occupation provided itself; I became aware of a gentle knocking, perceptible at a slight distance from the wall. When I was in prison before I had learned to use this means of communication with my fellow-captives, and the alphabetical code at once came back to me.[1]

It is difficult to describe my joy when I heard the familiar sounds, and supposed they must be addressed to myself, but I was soon undeceived. I began to knock back,

[1] The letters of the alphabet being arranged in certain groups, *e.g.* :—

a b c d e f
g h i k l m
n o p r s t
u v w x y z,

words are made up by knocking so many times on the wall for each letter. First the horizontal line in which the letter stands is counted, and then its number in the line. For example, to make the word "you" one would knock as follows: four taps, a short pause, five taps, a longer pause; three taps, a short pause, two taps, longer pause; four taps, short pause, one tap. The taps are not only heard in the neighbouring cell, but sometimes in far-distant ones if they have a common wall.

but found out at once that the signals were not meant for me; two friends were having a conversation, and they would not answer my attempts to introduce myself. This knocking was strictly forbidden, and they hesitated to admit an unknown person to their company, fearing to be entrapped, and deprived of further intercourse. I was obliged to content myself with making out what these two said to each other in their short conversations, but it was only stereotyped, often-recurring phrases: "Good morning," "How have you slept?" "What are you doing?" and the answers: "Well," "Drinking tea," etc. I envied them the exchange of such insignificant speeches. I never discovered whether they were two men or two women, or a man and a woman.

I do not know how long it was before I underwent my first examination, it must have been about eight or ten days. Until then, from the first moment I arrived in Russia, I had not officially been even asked my name. Like a box or parcel coming from abroad, I had been passed on from hand to hand with my official form of consignment, no one caring to learn who I was. The gendarmes appeared to know that I had taken the name of Bullgin, being in reality Deutsch; but they had no idea with what I was charged, and did not seem interested to find out. Besides, in the Fortress of Peter and Paul names were not necessary —were even useless—for one was never spoken to, intercourse was carried on by gestures only.

One morning my clothes were brought me, as I supposed for the customary walk, but I was led into a room where at a table covered with a blue cloth sat three men dressed like functionaries of the law. I was given a chair, and one of them informed me he was the examining magistrate "in specially grave cases" at the Petersburg law courts. His own name was Olshàninov, and he introduced one of his companions as the Public Prosecutor, Mouraviev;[1] the name of the third he did not tell me.

[1] The present Minister of Justice (1902).

Then began the hearing of the case. To the usual questions concerning name, etc., I answered the truth. I knew I had nothing now either to lose or to gain. I told the whole story of the assault on Gorinòvitch, of course not giving the name of any other person concerned, and not attempting to excuse myself in the least. I knew I could injure no one now by telling the whole affair, for all who were in any way connected with it had been sentenced five years back; and as to myself, it could make no difference, for by the terms of the extradition treaty between Russia and Baden the conditions of my prosecution were strictly laid down. In the interests of historical accuracy I considered it right that this episode in our movement should be correctly described.

During the hearing, which was conducted by the magistrate, the official whose name had not been mentioned addressed several questions to me. I did not recognise him at first, but later it appeared that I had known him at Kiëv, where—in 1877—he took part in my trial. His name was Kotliarèvsky; he was then Deputy Public Prosecutor in Kiëv, and now filled the same post at the Petersburg Appeal Courts, where he had to conduct the political cases in particular. It will thus be seen that this was the real owner of the position which Bogdanòvitch had falsely claimed when pretending to identify me at Freiburg. Although Kotliarèvsky was in very bad odour with the revolutionists, and had been shot at by Ossìnsky in 1878, I was in a way glad to meet him in this gloomy place, for, at any rate, his face was a familiar one. And he behaved in a very friendly way to me. We were soon deep in conversation, recounting our respective experiences since we had last met. That we might not disturb the magistrate, who was making out the protocol, we sat a little apart, and chatted quite comfortably. Kotliarèvsky remarked that I had altered very much; "and not only in outward appearance, I mean," he said, "your whole character seems to me changed." That might well be.

Kotliarèvsky was noted for keen observation, and this faculty was very useful to him in his peculiar sphere.

"Do you remember what a hot-headed young fellow you were? How you once nearly threw an ink-bottle at my head?"

I remembered the incident perfectly, and saw why he referred to it. When I was at Kiëv I was in a high state of nervous excitability, and in consequence was often hasty and irritable. Partly because of this, and partly because I was a member of the "Buntari," in whose programme was included a continual warfare against all recognised authorities, Kotliarèvsky and I once came to loggerheads. The point of dispute was the signing of a protocol, which I absolutely refused to do. In a towering passion I seized the ink-bottle, and was quite ready to hurl it at him had he persisted in trying to force me; but he saw my intention, and keeping quite composed, called the warder and whispered something to him. Seeing the man hasten away, I thought he had gone for the guard to put me in confinement. Great was my surprise and joy, therefore, when after a few minutes the door opened, and my friend Stefanòvitch[1] appeared on the threshold. It was a delight to us both, for although in the same prison, we had not hitherto been allowed to meet.

"Will you kindly pacify your comrade?" said Kotliarèvsky, turning to Stefanòvitch. "His nerves seem a little overstrained."

I learned thus to appreciate the adroitness of this man, and thanked him now for his considerate treatment of me on that occasion, which seemed to gratify him.

In the course of our conversation I expressed my surprise that although I had been surrendered by Germany as an ordinary criminal, only to be proceeded against as such, they had brought me to the Fortress of Peter and Paul, which everyone knows is reserved for "politicals." "Neither do I understand," I added, "why I have been

[1] See pp. 15 and 98, note, p. 210, and portrait, p. 112.

brought to Petersburg, when the deed for which I am to answer was committed in Odessa, and according to law the trial should take place there."

Kotliarèvsky gave me no answer on this point, but he promised to see about my being allowed to provide myself with more comforts from my own purse, and said he would speak to Plehve,[1] the chief of the Central Department of the State Police.

Shortly after this Colonel Lesnik gave me a more comfortable cell on the first floor, and henceforward he treated me somewhat better. Two days later he told me that my money and luggage had arrived from the police department, so I could now purchase food and tobacco. I congratulated myself even more on getting my spectacles again; but it seemed that for this I must have an order from the prison doctor, and he was sent to see me. He was an elderly man of between sixty and seventy, and had the rank of a general officer. He was well known to be of a very harsh and unpleasant disposition, and soon gave me a proof of his quality. He turned up my eyelids, fixed me with a forbidding glare, and declared off-hand that my eyes were perfectly normal and that I did not need glasses. In reality qualified oculists have diagnosed a rather unusual abnormality in my vision, and since my eighteenth year I have been obliged to use spectacles for reading.

This dictum of the prison doctor upset me cruelly; I felt so desperate that I could scarcely control myself, but was ready to weep and to curse.

"I beg you to consider again," I cried. "You are quite mistaken; I really cannot read without glasses. Think what you are doing; you are condemning me to a hideous torture, in robbing me of the only distraction allowed here."

Nothing was of any avail; the man remained immovable, repeating obstinately, "You do not need glasses," and

[1] The present Minister of the Interior.—*Trans.*

therewith took his departure. I clenched my fists, a prey to impotent wrath, and nearly broke down altogether. But what was I to do? I had to bear it; and it is hard to say what a man cannot put up with. But to this moment I cannot think of that doctor without my blood boiling. The only consolation left me was my cigarette, and it became a friend and comforter in my loneliness. To a captive smoking not merely gives pleasure, but takes from him the sense of utter desolation.

The days passed on in miserable inactivity. Then one morning a sound fell upon my ears, someone was knocking again, and in my immediate neighbourhood, as it seemed. Was it for me? I replied at once with the familiar signal. It was for me; what joy! Now I should know what comrades lay here, and should be able to exchange thoughts with a human being.

"Who are you?" "In what case are you concerned?" were the questions I deciphered. I seized my comb, the only hard movable object to be found in my prison cell, and tapped the answer. My interlocutor expressed his surprise and asked, "How did you come here?" To my question, "Who are you?" the answer was "Kobiliànsky." I was no less surprised to "meet" him here (if so one may express it). We had not previously known one another personally, but I knew that in 1880 he had been condemned to penal servitude for life, on account of his participation in various terrorist affairs, and had long ago been deported to the Siberian mines on the Kara. How came he, then, to be in the Fortress of Peter and Paul? I burned with impatience to learn his adventures, but he was just as anxious to hear mine, and I had to give way to him. Scarcely, however, had I told him as shortly as possible how I had been arrested in Germany and given up to Russia, when I was interrupted by a voice, "So you are knocking?"

I sprang up and looked round. Before me stood Colonel Lesnik, accompanied by some gendarmes. The

door had been noiselessly opened; I had been observed, and caught in the act; there was no getting out of it.

"I give you fair warning, if you attempt such a thing again, you will be put back on the ground-floor, and deprived of tobacco, and of exercise." Thereupon he departed, and I felt like a naughty schoolboy, found out and disgraced. Moreover, I had to give up hope of learning why Kobiliànsky had been brought back from Siberia.[1]

Shortly after this event, one day my clothes were brought to me at an unusual hour. I supposed there was going to be another hearing of my case; but no, apparently I was to be taken right away. My luggage was brought, and the captain of the gendarmerie appeared, the same who had escorted me hither from the station.

"Where are we going—to Odessa?" The officer gave me no answer.

"Evidently we are going to the station," I thought, when the captain and I were seated in a droschky. It was just the transition hour on a "bright night," when one hardly knows whether it is evening twilight or dawn. The weather was perfect, and I felt my spirits rise at the prospect of the journey to Odessa. But alas! the carriage took another turning, it was not going to the station, and we were soon in the courtyard of a huge stone prison. It was the House of Detention for prisoners under examination.

[1] I learned the following particulars later. In May, 1882, some of the political prisoners at Kara escaped. They were soon recaptured, and horribly severe measures were then set on foot in their prison. It was resolved to send away the "most dangerous element." Thirteen men were chosen, on any kind of pretext, only four of them having been concerned in the escape, and they were all despatched to the Fortress of Peter and Paul, and afterwards to Schlüsselburg, the special prison for politicals. There the harshest régime prevails, and no one who enters is ever set free again. Kobiliànsky shared this fate, although he had not been one of those who had broken loose from prison. Nearly all these unhappy men met their death in Schlüsselburg: among them Butzinsky, Gèhlis, I. Ivànov, Kobiliànsky, Shturkòvsky, and Shtchedrin. Only one survives (1902)—Michael Popov.

CHAPTER VII

CHANGED CONDITIONS — A FRUSTRATED PLAN — THE MINISTER'S VISIT—A SECRET OF STATE—MY LITERARY NEIGHBOUR

WHEN the officer of gendarmerie handed me over to the governor of the gaol, he pointed with his finger to a sentence in my charge-sheet, whereupon the governor looked at me sharply. It was clear his attention was being drawn to the warning of my former escapes, and the need for strict surveillance.

I saw from the first that prison rules were less strict here. My belongings, after examination, were brought into my cell. As soon as I could look them over, I sought for the hidden money and scissors, and behold, there they were! The careful scrutiny, both at the fortress and here, had been no more successful in detecting them than had previous examinations. The scissors I again concealed; but I wanted to change the German notes, so as to have at any rate part of my money available, and that was not a very simple matter. I began to observe the warders carefully; there were three of them on my corridor. The man who had searched my luggage seemed to me the most promising, and I determined to bribe him. When he came on duty I took the money out of its hiding-place, and called him into my cell.

"What do you want?" he asked, coming in and shutting the door behind him.

"Did you search my luggage properly when I arrived here?"

"Yes, of course; is anything wrong?" he asked, quite alarmed.

"Oh, nothing much!" I said soothingly. "Only, I had better tell you that you don't know how to search. Look here! you never found these!" and I held the bank-notes under his nose.

"Impossible!" he cried; "where were they hidden?"

"Well, that is my secret," said I. "But listen! It is German money, and if changed would come to about fifty roubles.[1] Take it, and when you are off duty go to a money-changer—there are several on the Nevsky Prospekt—and get it changed for Russian money. Half shall be yours, and half mine. Is that agreed?"

"All right. I'll see to it," he said, and went off with the money.

"He bites," I thought to myself; and at once began building castles in the air. I knew from experience that the great thing was to establish communication with the outer world, and this we revolutionists had often effected by bribing warders to take letters into and out of prison. In Kiëv and the south we called such warders "carrier-pigeons." When I saw how easily this one fell in with my proposal, I immediately began to plan out further steps.

"After a few days," I said to myself, "we will try him with a letter for the post; and next I shall send him to someone I know with a commission. When once things are in train, who knows? something may come of it."

It was in the morning that I had given the warder my money, and I was in great excitement all day. Several times he looked through the peephole in my door, smiled and nodded at me, and of course I replied in similar fashion. Towards evening he came into my cell again, and laid my notes down on the table. "Take them back," he said; "I am afraid of getting into trouble. See here; a little while ago one of the others had two watches given

[1] Nearly £5 10s.—*Trans.*

him, and they were found on him, and he was dismissed. You see, I've a good place here, and get twenty-five roubles[1] a month. I shouldn't get so much again in a hurry. No, I'm afraid; take it back!"

Of course I did not press him, for I knew that without courage he would never make a "carrier-pigeon." I saw no chance now of changing the notes secretly, so I told him to take them to the governor, that they might be added to the rest of my money.

"Tell him you found them in searching my luggage."

"No, no, that won't do. There would be no end of a fuss because I hadn't given them up directly. I'd rather tell the truth, and say you had just given them to me."

Thus did my visions end in smoke. The money was taken charge of, and no further inquiry made.

Soon after this my books were brought to me, and I could also use the prison library. After being for so long prevented from reading, this was a great boon; and as writing materials were also allowed me, I was altogether far better off here than in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. Still, the little cell with its stone floor became a perfect oven in the heat of summer, most unpleasantly stuffy and dusty; and the food was inferior both in quantity and quality. But the walks were what was most disagreeable. Imagine a huge circle, divided into sections by partitions running from centre to circumference. In these cattle-pens we were allowed to disport ourselves singly, carefully watched all the while by warders stationed on a raised platform at the centre of the circle, commanding all the "cattle-pens"; so that the prisoners had no chance of communicating with each other. One could see nothing but the wooden partitions, the back of the prison buildings, and a narrow strip of sky; but every day we had to breathe the air here for three-quarters of an hour, which seemed an endless time for such "recreation."

In comparison with the uncanny stillness of the fortress,

[1] About £2 5s.—*Trans.*

things here seemed full of life and bustle. The windows of the corridor looked into the street, and its noises could be heard in the cells—the rumbling of carriages, the cries of street-hawkers, or the dulcet music of an organ-grinder. One felt so near freedom that the burden of prison life was the heavier.

One day I heard unusually lively sounds in the corridor —scrubbing, sweeping, and a general tidying-up. Some important visit seemed to be expected, and I soon learned that the Minister of Justice, Nabòkov, was coming to inspect the prison. Shortly after, he appeared in my cell, accompanied by a numerous suite; and when my name was pronounced, he greeted me and said—

"I have read your deposition, and was much pleased with its frankness. I hope you will speak out in the same way before the court."

I replied that, as I have already said, it was my object to state the exact historical truth.

He went, but came back again, and put one or two unimportant questions to me, looking, however, as though there were something else he would have liked to say. He bent forward a little in speaking, and held his hand to his ear. His whole bearing was simple and unaffected.

Kotliarèvsky was among the suite. He remained behind a moment, and told me he wanted to speak to me when the minister had gone. Some time after I was taken to him in a room that served as the prison schoolroom.

"I am not here on business," said he, "but I should like to have a chat with you about old times."

So we sat down on a school-form and talked. Following a remark of mine, Kotliarèvsky touched on the question I had raised before as to the reason for my confinement in the Fortress of Peter and Paul.

"Why, you see, there were very important interests of State to consider," he said. "It was like this: if you were brought before an ordinary tribunal and only prosecuted on the Gorinòvitch count, you might be merely

condemned to seven or eight years in Siberia; and that would not be agreeable in *high quarters*." He accented the last words.

"But they cannot try me otherwise," I cried. "Germany only extradited me on that stipulation."

"Well, that remains to be seen," said he. "We are at present on very good terms with Bismarck, and he would not mind at all giving us this little proof of his friendship. Or, if necessary, it could easily be made out that you had committed some offence *after* your extradition. Which reminds me—the Germans have sent us on all the notes that you made in Freiburg gaol."

I was utterly astonished. I remembered that from sheer ennui I had now and then written down odds and ends of notes, plans, etc., while I was at Freiburg, but I could not conceive how those scraps could have come into the hands of the Russian Government, for I had destroyed all my manuscripts before leaving. I could only suppose that when I was out of my cell for exercise some single sheets might have been abstracted. Even then it seemed impossible that they could afford any foundation for a fresh accusation sufficient to set aside the extradition treaty with Germany. But Kotliarèvsky reassured me on that head.

"Oh, never fear! they would soon manage that. Nothing would be easier than to get Germany's consent, and then they would sentence you according to your deserts. People who have had far less against them than you—Mallnka, Drebyàsgin, Maidànsky—have long ago been executed. And you—you broke out of prison just when you were at last to be brought up for judgment in the Gorinòvitch case. Then for quite eight years you were engaged in conspiracies; and then you were the instigator, along with Stefanòvitch, of the Tchigirln affair, and so on, and so on. That all this should only let you in for a few years' hard labour did not at all suit the views of Government. So when you were extradited a special council was held in *high circles*. Of course, I was not there. I am

not numbered among the elect; but this is what I have been told. At first they were all unanimous in declaring that a modification of the extradition treaty must be arranged, so that you might be brought before a special tribunal. Then, as you can easily imagine, they would have made short work with you! But one of these great personages had a qualm, and he urged, 'Germany might fall in with our views. Well and good! But is that really a good precedent? They have caught Deutsch for us now. To-morrow a still more important capture might be made in some other country, and then it might be hard for us to get an extradition. The Press would make a hubbub; they would say, Russia never respects treaties, and would point to the case of Deutsch as an example.' This consideration influenced the majority, and it was consequently resolved to proceed against you in the Gorinòvitch case only. This is why you were put into the Fortress of Peter and Paul until a decision was arrived at."

It is quite possible that Kotliarèvsky betrayed this secret of state to me with the object of loosening my tongue; but perhaps he really had no afterthought, and told tales out of school just for the joke of it.

In the further course of our conversation he touched on many subjects, among others on political prosecutions in Russia. I remarked to him how often perfectly harmless persons were condemned to fearful punishments.

"What would you have?" he replied. "When trees are felled there must be chips. As the ancient Romans said: '*Summum jus, summa injuria.*' Personally I do not approve of capital punishment at all. I say to myself that in a great state political offences are inevitable. With a population of many millions there must always be a few thousand malcontents, and, of course, examples must be made of any disturbers of the peace. But a strong Government ought to be able to render them innocuous without resorting to the death penalty."

In pursuance of this theme, he then asked me, to all appearance casually, how many Terrorists in my opinion there might be in Russia. I answered that I knew nothing at all about it, for I myself did not now belong to the Terrorists, but to the Social-Democratic party.

"Oh yes," he said, "but as a 'friendly power' you must be able to judge as to the strength of the terrorist organisation. I think myself their numbers must be very small now."

In point of fact there were indeed very few active Terrorists left in Russia. I did not, however, wish to strengthen Kotliarèvsky's opinion about the "friendly powers," so told him that according to my estimate there could be only a few thousand, not more.

"How can you make that out?" he asked. "It is quite impossible; I reckon at most some hundreds. They have been imprisoned in crowds just lately."

I persisted in my opinion, and therewith we separated.

At this time, *i.e.* in the summer of 1881, there were in this House of Detention a number of prisoners accused of different political offences. One of these so-called offences, on account of which numberless persons had been sent to prison in Petersburg, Moscow, and many smaller towns, or even in Siberia, was what Kotliarèvsky called "the old clothes case." He gave me the following account of this highly important affair of state. In some domiciliary visit the police had found a note containing the names of persons who were assisting the political prisoners by providing them with clothes and other necessaries. Thereupon a number of these persons were arrested; and he told me that an imposing case was being trumped up against this "secret society," under the name of the "Red Cross League of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*." (Of course, Kotliarèvsky did not mind giving a sly hit at the gendarmerie, with whom the police officials have many little tiffs, each often putting a spoke in the other's wheel.)

A pretty conspiracy indeed—for providing prisoners with old clothes! I shall hereafter always allude to this case as the "old clothes affair," and hope to show by it some of the little peculiarities of "administrative methods" in Russia. These "administrative methods" are sometimes extremely unpleasant for those treated by them. The gendarmerie can imprison people, and exile them to Siberia or the outlying provinces without trial, all by "administrative methods."

Besides those implicated in the "old clothes affair," there were at this time in the gaol many prisoners involved in other cases, among them several well-known literary men—Protopòpov, Krivènko, Stanyukòvitch, and Erthel. The first-named was my neighbour, and we were soon knocking to one another, though not without some misunderstanding at the outset. Directly I told him my name he left off replying to my taps, I could not imagine why. Several days passed. I could hear him going up and down in his cell, could catch his voice when he spoke to the warder, but he left all my signals unanswered; so concluding that he was afraid of being caught (though the officials of this prison did not seem to make much fuss over the knocking), I left off in despair. After a little, however, he began again. "Why do you hide your name from me?" he asked. I replied that I had told him my name at the very beginning, and repeated it; upon which he hastened to apologise: "I took you for a spy; for I could not make out what you said, and thought you seemed to be knocking confusedly on purpose, so that I might not decipher the name."

We now conversed together freely. Our names were well known to each other, and we had many common friends. Of course, we were very anxious to know one another by sight, and we accomplished this in the following manner. From the windows of our cells, which were on the fifth floor, we could see into the "cattle-pens"; and though we were all supposed to take our exercise

at the same time, we arranged together that each should manage to get out of it on different days, and that he who remained in his cell should recognise the other by a preconcerted signal. The next thing was to know one another's voice, and this also we succeeded in effecting. We knew that in this prison "politicals," in the "Case of the 193," not only spoke together, but even conveyed small objects to one another, by means of the water-closet pipes. The sanitary system here was so arranged that on all the six storeys each pair of cells was in communication, not only with one another, but also with those immediately above and below. Thus twelve prisoners could arrange together that they should simultaneously let the water run, so making a space in the pipes that acted as a speaking-tube; and if one spoke into the opening the voice could be heard perfectly in the connected cells, while the running water prevented any inconvenient odour. In this fashion we instituted a club of twelve members.

CHAPTER VIII

FRESH FEARS—THE COLONEL OF GENDARMERIE—INQUIRY INTO THE CASE OF GENERAL MEZENTZEV'S MURDER—MEETING WITH BÓGDANOVITCH—DEPARTURE

DURING my imprisonment in the Petersburg House of Detention my spirits were altogether more cheerful than they had been since my first arrest. At Freiburg I had been in a chronic state of excitement and unrest, longing for the freedom that seemed so near. In the Fortress of Peter and Paul I had been downcast and despairing. Now I had reached a condition of equanimity and indifference.

"Hard labour in the Siberian mines," I thought to myself. "What does it matter whether it be for ten years or fifteen? It is much the same to me." My future was done for, my life gone. It is hard for a man to reconcile himself to such a thought, particularly when he feels physically sound and healthy, but one does somehow get accustomed to it. At times there will arise sudden hopes, dreams of unexpected luck, of happiness in a distant future; and then wild visions chase one another in dazzling pictures through one's brain. But I had lived through too many bitter self-deceptions of the kind when I was at Freiburg; and I was only annoyed with myself when I found my fancy dallying with them, and tried to extinguish them at once. "Nonsense!" I cried to myself; "if anything, the only unexpected turn Fate will do you will be some bad trick." And I steadfastly made up my mind to the worst.

Weeks had gone by since my change of prisons, and during that time I had not been once up for examination. I did not know in the least how my affair was going. "Perhaps in 'high circles' they've taken a new departure, and invented some other means of treating me as a political criminal. Why am I not brought before the court? Why do they not send me to Odessa? Something must be happening." I had begun to fidget in this way occasionally, when one July morning, as I came back from my walk feeling rather cheerful, the warder said to me, "Make yourself ready; they have come to fetch you!" A hired droschky awaited me at the door, and I and a gendarme got into it. From him I could learn nothing as to our destination, and although this uncertainty did not last long, it made me feel uncomfortably nervous. After about half an hour the carriage stopped in the courtyard of a large building. I was taken into a small cell with a tiny window, whose panes were of thick ribbed glass. As I was pacing up and down here I noticed an officer at the peephole in the door observing me closely.

"May I come in?" he asked, hesitatingly opening the peephole window.

"A strange question! I am at your disposal, not you at mine," said I. The door opened, and smiling apologetically, a young man in the uniform of a colonel of gendarmerie stepped in.

"Allow me to introduce myself"—he bowed and clicked his spurs together—"Colonel Ivànov."

"I do not understand," said I. "Will you please tell me where I am, and why I have been brought here?"

"This is the office of the gendarmerie headquarters; you have been brought here for examination, and will soon be taken before the Public Prosecutor. I only wanted to have a chat with you, and revive some old memories. We have many common acquaintances."

"But how do you know me?" I asked, surprised.

"Oh, excuse me," he cried, smiling, "there is hardly

an intelligent person in all Russia who does not know you by name."

The young gentleman appeared to class himself among the "intellectuals"—that set in Russian Society which just at this time was protesting against the reactionary tendency and making its influence felt in some of the best Russian journals. In the language of that section of the Press it was customary to designate the revolutionists by the harmless title of "intellectuals."

"Oh, we have many common acquaintances," the colonel resumed. "I knew all your comrades—Malinka, Dreby-àsghin, Maidànsky. I was formerly adjutant of gendarmerie at Odessa, and made acquaintance with them there. They were really delightful people."

Now I understood why this man was a colonel already, notwithstanding his youth. The big political cases during the end of the seventies and beginning of the eighties had given many officers of gendarmerie and of the law grand opportunities for self-advancement. The lives and freedom of the "politicals" were the merchandise by which they founded their fortunes. This gentleman had no doubt played no insignificant part in condemning to penal servitude or to death those comrades of mine on whom he was now lavishing his compliments. Perhaps he had been the originator of the happy thought by which the traitor Kùritzin was induced to sacrifice so many victims.[1]

My interview with this engaging young man was not exactly to my mind, and I was glad to be called away. I was taken to a comfortably furnished apartment, where Kotliarèvsky was seated in an armchair before a large table, looking over some papers.

[1] Kùritzin was arrested in consequence of the attempt upon Gorinòvitch, and turned traitor unknown to his former comrades. He was shut up in a cell with the other prisoners, so that he might spy upon them; and through his information some of them were sent to the mines in Siberia, and many others delivered into the clutches of the law. I believe that he himself is now practising somewhere as a veterinary surgeon.

"I have some documents here that concern you," he said, and began to read aloud:—

"In the beginning of August, 1878, the widow of the murdered Baron Gèhkin, adjutant in the gendarmerie, observed in the neighbourhood of General Mèzentzev's house two young men who were apparently watching for the General." The document went on to state that the Baroness had recognised one of these young men to be myself; and on the following day she had seen them again on the watch, her cousin Baron Berg being with her at the time. Then followed a paper in which Baron Berg corroborated the lady's evidence. There was a time, 1878–9, when a good many people delighted in romancing about me, and persisted in ascribing to me a prominent rôle in events taking place in the most widely separated parts of Russia. These imaginings even found their way into the press, and I was often surprised to read in the papers accounts of my varied exploits; I seemed to be a perfect Stenka Rasìn![1]

I remember, for example, that on May 25th, 1878, when I was still in prison at Kiëv, a rich lady of that place was murdered, evidently by thieves. Baron Gèhkin was shot on the following night, May 26th; and on the night *after* that, May 27th, I and two comrades escaped from prison. I soon saw in the newspapers that, according to the opinion of many astute persons, the author of both these murders could be none other than myself!

The evidence as to my being concerned in the death of General Mèzentzev was in the same way complete nonsense. When Kotliarèvsky had read me the documents, he asked me what I had to say about them.

"It appears that the Government has not given up the attempt to implicate me in affairs not specified in the extradition treaty," I said; "I shall therefore refuse to answer questions relating to any outside matter."

[1] A noted Cossack chieftain of the seventeenth century, who has become a hero of Russian popular romance.—*Trans.*

"Well, if you refuse to give evidence, we will leave it alone," said Kotliarèvsky, with perfect composure, and he clapped the papers together again. "Besides, I may as well tell you that I attach no importance to the testimony of these good people. So far as I can make out, you had already gone abroad when Mèzentzev was murdered?"

I assented. He seemed, nevertheless, to want to draw me out on this subject; but as I did not assist his endeavours in that direction he began to chat about indifferent matters, asking me questions as to our Socialist propaganda and our views. When, however, I quoted from some of our writings, he confessed that they were quite unknown to him.

While we were talking, Bogdanòvitch came in from a neighbouring room. My readers will remember him as the gentleman who had been by way of identifying me at Freiburg. He greeted me, and sat down at the table. We met without any sign of ill-feeling or recollection of the sharp passage-at-arms we had had together.

"I wish you would tell me," I said to him, "as it is now a thing of the past, when did you see me in Kiëv? I have no remembrance of you."

He replied, laughing, that he had seen me once in prison; but I saw at once that he was bluffing. Evidently he had recognised me at Freiburg merely from Kotliarèvsky's description. I was curious to know when exactly the Baden authorities had found out with whom they were dealing; and when I asked him this, Bogdanòvitch replied, "They knew some weeks before the extradition that you could not be Bulìgin, and then you were put under stricter supervision, with a guard before the prison. About ten days before my arrival they were informed that you were Deutsch."[1]

[1] While these pages are in the press comes the news (May, 1903) o Bogdanòvitch's assassination. Having risen to be Governor of Ufa, he had suppressed in a very brutal manner a strike at Zlatoust. Shortly afterwards he was shot in a public park, and his assailants escaped.—*Trans.*

It was now clear to me why I had been moved into a different cell, and also why Herr von Berg had forbidden me to speak Russian with my visitors.

As I was going away, to be taken back to the House of Detention, I asked Kotliarèvsky whether I should soon be brought before a fully qualified tribunal. He could give me no decided answer, and himself seemed surprised at my being kept in Petersburg so long.

This was the last time I saw Kotliarèvsky. I learned afterwards in Siberia, from comrades arriving there, that though he had dealt fairly by me, his conduct of some political trials had been considered altogether too mean; it not only drew down on him the bitter hatred of the accused, but was too much even for his superiors, and he was withdrawn from the cases. About three years ago he was President of the Courts at Vilna; where he is now (1902) I do not know.

This interview convinced me still further that the Government would not be content to restrict themselves to prosecuting me in the Gorinòvitch case. Every morning I awoke wondering what would happen next; but day after day went by without anything fresh. July came, then August, and I was still waiting in my cell. One day towards the end of August gendarmes again came for me, and I was ordered to prepare for a journey; it had at last been decided to send me to Odessa. While the carriage conveyed me through the streets I sadly took leave of my beloved Petersburg, which I could never hope to see again.

CHAPTER IX

A RAY OF HOPE — AN UNHEARD-OF RÉGIME — THE HUNGER-STRIKE—OUR CLUB—A SECRET ALLY

MY removal to Odessa went off without any noteworthy incident. The change of scene, the railway journey, the sight of people, their doings, their speech, all had a reviving effect on me; but the company of three gendarmes did not allow me to forget for an instant that I was a prisoner on my way to judgment. The idea of escape, however, never left me, and once at least circumstances seemed favourable. It was night; we were already nearing Odessa. I had been dozing, and when I awoke I saw that all three gendarmes were fast asleep. My heart began to thump wildly, and my plan was made in an instant: to get my scissors out of their hiding-place, cut off my beard, stride over the sleeping gendarmes, step out on to the footboard of the train, and jump off. But as this flashed through my mind, one gendarme opened his eyes, waked the others by shaking them violently, and scolded them with a most self-righteous air for not keeping guard. I feigned sleep, and the scene was over.

In Odessa a prison van with barred windows awaited me. I was taken at first to a prison for political offenders, under the rule of the gendarmerie. While my belongings were being searched, the scissors suddenly fell on the floor, to the no small astonishment of the warder, a former gendarme.

"Nice order they keep in Petersburg! Prisoners are allowed to have scissors there!" he exclaimed. He

imagined I had brought them openly in my luggage, and of course I left him in his pride at being cleverer than his colleagues in the capital.

In this prison conditions were very much like those in the Fortress of Peter and Paul: rather large, dark cells, tolerably good food, the same strict, formal bearing of the gendarmes, and the same all-pervading silence. In order at once to draw attention to the stipulations of the extradition treaty, I expressed my astonishment at being again put into a prison for "politicals." Whether on account of this protest or because of an order from Petersburg I do not know, but after a few days I was removed to the prison for ordinary criminals.

It was evening, an evening that I shall never forget. They put me into a cell, and when the door closed behind me I could at first see nothing, the cell was so dark, and only the feeble rays of a lamp shone through a little window in the door. When my eyes had begun to accustom themselves to the dimness I set to work to take stock of my quarters. The cell was circular, and contained no bed, chair, nor table; only the customary wooden tub, a water-bucket, also of wood, and some straw on the floor—nothing else. I was much surprised, and thought there must have been some mistake. I went to the door, and saw through the peephole that two armed soldiers were on guard, while on a bench close by sat a gendarme and a policeman. I had been in many prisons, but this state of things was new to me.

"Look here! What is all this? Where are the bedstead and mattress?" I asked, sticking my head through the little window.

"Don't know," said the gendarme briefly.

"Then call the governor!"

He did not stir, but after a while the deputy-governor appeared.

"Will you tell me what this means?" I said, indicating the state of the cell.

"I know nothing about it," replied he. "We have simply followed instructions. You must apply to the Deputy Public Prosecutor, who will be here to-morrow."

I felt horribly cast down. "What shall I do if they refuse to improve things?" I thought, sitting down in the straw with my head in my hands. Soon fatigue overpowered me, and I lay down; but hardly had I gone to sleep when I sprang up broad awake—mice were scratching and burrowing in the straw! I paced up and down the tiny cell, feeling how stifling the atmosphere was. The tub stank vilely; the space outside where the four watchers were was small, and only used-up air penetrated thence into the cell. I wished I could effect some ventilation, but the window was high up and could not be opened. I awaited the day with impatience, hoping I should at least be able to breathe some fresh air. Wearily the hours dragged along; sometimes I had to lie down for a moment's rest, but only to spring up again because of the mice. At last day dawned.

"Take me to the air!" I cried to the gendarme, who seemed here to act as warder.

"I have no orders to do so," was his reply.

Towards midday the Deputy Public Prosecutor arrived. I explained to him the horrible conditions to which I had been subjected, and demanded redress.

He listened to me, but assured me he could do nothing whatever.

"But tell me what hinders you from giving me a bedstead?"

"You could climb up to the window and try to escape."

"Excuse me," said I, "do consider what you say. Four men are watching me; even if I stood on the bed I could not reach the window without their seeing me. This is the fifth floor, and a sentry goes backwards and forwards below the window; if I could pass him I should next have to climb over a wall as high as a house, on the further side of which another sentry is posted! Surely

you must see," I urged, "that under these circumstances any attempt at flight is out of the question."

"Who can tell? You have often got away before."

"Only twice," I corrected.

"Well, that's quite enough," said he. "I can't do anything for you." And he went away.

I had already made up my mind what to do now. On no account would I put up with this treatment, but would maintain a passive resistance.

The gendarme brought my food in a wooden vessel and placed it on the floor.

"Take it away! I shall not eat anything," I said.

He took it up again and withdrew in silence.

This was repeated every day at meal-times. The hours dragged on. I could get no fresh air, could not read, as they would give me no books, could not even sleep for the mice. I did not feel any great craving for food, but drank water continually. In mind I suffered frightfully, not that I felt any anger against these people, but I was irritated beyond measure at the utter senselessness of such treatment.

"You will have time enough," I apostrophised the staff, "to poison life for me after I am once sentenced; but for the present I am only on trial."

For three days I went without food, and nobody seemed to trouble themselves about it, though, of course, the attendants knew what was going on. On the afternoon of the fourth day I was taken to the office. Unwashed (I had purposely abstained from washing ever since my arrival), my clothes covered with dust and bits of straw, I appeared before the Public Prosecutor of Odessa and the examining magistrate. They informed me they were there for the preliminary inquiry into my case, and would take my evidence. I told them I was in no condition to answer questions, and set forth my grievances, saying that I intended to starve myself as a protest.

"Oh, you refuse to take your food? Well, then, we shall have to feed you by artificial means."[1]

As I knew what he meant, I replied promptly, "Try it, then! But I warn you that if you do, I know of a way to bring on sickness and diarrhœa, and it will simply hasten my end." Of course, I did not know anything of the kind, but thought this piece of bluff might ward off the fulfilment of the Prosecutor's threat.

He looked sharply at me, and threw a meaning glance at the magistrate, as if to say, "The devil only knows what this fellow mayn't be up to! He's an old hand, and knows all the tricks of the trade."

For a moment they were both silent. I saw that my words had taken effect, and began to dilate on their folly in treating me as they were doing.

"You must allow," I said, "that all this is scarcely reasonable. The Government treats with Germany for my extradition, an important official travels to Baden on that account, you make no end of a fuss before the eyes of all Europe; and when, after setting all this machinery of the State to work, you have at last got hold of me, you can't bring the accused to justice, because you have driven him to commit suicide! And all on account of such mere trifles to you as a bed and a few other necessaries! You must see how out of proportion the whole thing is."

"Well, I'll go and see for myself how they have provided for you," said the Public Prosecutor, and went off.

When he returned he seemed in some excitement: "Well, it's perfectly true," he exclaimed, "they have used you shamefully! I assure you it is no fault of mine. Three persons have united against you—the colonel of the gendarmerie, the governor of the town, who controls the police, and the commandant of the military garrison.

[1] Not long before this some political prisoners had got up a "hunger-strike" as a protest against unjust treatment; and the authorities becoming alarmed at their condition of weakness, the prison doctor, Dr. Rosen, had forcibly administered nourishment by means of the enema.

Before your transference to this prison they all three came here, settled all the arrangements, gave their orders, and sent subordinates from their own departments to keep guard over you. Unfortunately I cannot overrule these arrangements on my own responsibility, but I will apply personally to the authorities concerned; and all I can do in the meantime is privately to advise the governor of the gaol to consult your wishes as far as possible."

Thereupon the governor was called in, and the Public Prosecutor repeated this to him in my presence. We then concluded a sort of compromise. A proper bed was brought into my cell for the night, my books were given to me, and a table and writing-things for the daytime. All these things had to be taken away again if any officials were coming round who might report the matter. That I might get a little fresh air the governor arranged for me to take exercise in an outer courtyard where the other prisoners could not see me. Upon these conditions I consented not to prolong my "hunger-strike," and that evening I partook of some food. It was only when I began to eat that I realised how fearfully hungry I was. I could have devoured an ox; but knowing that in such cases care is advisable, I put a curb on my appetite. During the two following days I felt very seedy, as though I had had a bad illness, and my attendants treated me rather like a convalescent; the governor and the deputy-governor inquired frequently after my health; even the gruff gendarme made himself agreeable, and went to the kitchen to buy me food and simple dainties.

The morning after this I went for exercise, accompanied by my four guardians. The yard set apart for me was a space between the prison building and the surrounding wall. The soldiers posted themselves at a little distance from each other, standing at attention, while I strolled up and down the space between them, closely attended by the gendarme and the policeman. It was heavenly weather, the clear, mild autumn of the South. As my

guardians seemed equally to appreciate the spell of freedom after the narrow, close corridor, our walks lasted longer and longer. I attempted on these occasions to get into more friendly relations with the gendarme, who, besides being stiffened by severe discipline, was naturally of a gloomy, morose turn of mind. When we were walking up and down, especially if the policeman were temporarily absent, I tried to engage him in conversation, and asked him questions on indifferent subjects. This man had been selected from among many others as the most trusty, zealous, and incorruptible. I must explain that as he had no substitute during his watch over me (which lasted two or three months), he was supposed to be never off duty, but to spend his entire time in the corridor outside my door, to eat there, and to sleep there as well as he could. To my knowledge he never once changed his clothes! The policeman, on the other hand, only remained twenty-four hours at a time on duty, being then relieved by another member of his force; and the two soldiers were changed every two hours, from the regular military guard which is attached to every Russian prison.

As I was saying, I tried to get the gendarme to talk to me during my exercise, and after a while I found out his weak side, and that even he had not a heart of stone. He had an enormous family; and it was very grievous to him that as he had received strict orders not to take his eyes off me for a second, he could never get away to visit his home. He at last contrived to move the governor to stand by him, and let him off for an hour now and then, without his superiors knowing of it. These secret visits of the gendarme to his wife and children led to a tacit understanding between him and me, and brought us more together. He could not help letting out complaints now and then about the severe discipline that kept him away from his family; and as I listened with much sympathy, he presently began to talk about the service, and his hard

work. He related to me how he had helped to get hold of Socialists in various ways.

"My chief once ordered me," he said, "to keep an eye privately on one of the *specialist* ladies" (unfamiliar words were rather a stumbling-block to him, and *socialist* was always *specialist* in his vocabulary). "Oh, she was a oner! Clever and cute, and could lead us all by the nose. Vera Figner[1] was her name. A real beauty she was, and must have been well brought up, and associated generally with the officers' families. Well, I dressed up in private clothes and followed her secretly wherever she went. If she took a carriage, I got into a droschky and went after her. If she went into a house, I took down the address, and asked the *concierge* who it was the fair lady had visited; so I got to know pretty well who her friends were. I followed her like this for three days. Suddenly she disappeared; I couldn't find her anywhere; she might have sunk into the ground. I tell you I did feel a fool! They say she went to Khàrkov, and that in the end she was caught."[2]

This zealous gendarme, who had dogged the footsteps of the "specialists" with such zest, became in the end quite confidential with me, especially when I told him I would give him this and that little thing as souvenirs when my fate was finally decided. From him I learned the details about the watch that was being kept over me. He confided to me, among other things, that the governor of the town, the commandant of the garrison, and the colonel of the gendarmerie had come to look at me during the first days of my imprisonment here; had spied at me through the peephole without my being aware of it, and had strictly ordered that I was not to be told.

By degrees the days grew shorter, and I did not know how to pass the time during the long evenings, for I had

[1] See portrait, p. 112.

[2] Vera Figner was arrested in Khàrkov during February, 1883, the informer Merkúlov having pointed her out in the street to the police. I shall have more to say about her later (see chap. xiii.).

no light. Often I ran up and down in my cell for hours together, till I was tired out. Sometimes I would station myself at the door, and listen to the conversation of my attendants. The policemen were the most entertaining; they relieved one another every twenty-four hours, and as it was only a few of the most trustworthy men in the force who took turns in this watch over me, I soon got to know them all. It was from them that the gendarme and I —almost equally prisoners—heard all the news, the gossip of the town, and so forth. Occasionally one of them would smuggle in a newspaper, which would then be read aloud in the select little club we formed. I would stick my hand with the paper in it through the peephole, so as to get some light, press my face against the opening, and read aloud to the others. The two soldiers would stand at ease beside the door, listening eagerly, while a few steps further off the policeman and the gendarme sat on their bench. If we had no newspaper, nor any special subject for talk, the policemen would tell tales of witches, demons, or the devil, to which the honourable members of the "club" listened with perhaps almost greater interest than to my political readings and disquisitions.

In this way I learned from time to time what was going on in the world, despite the attempts of three high functionaries to prevent (as the governor of the gaol phrased it) even a fly getting into my cell. Moreover, I managed besides to get news that is not to be found in Russian journals, namely, accounts of events in revolutionary Russia. A man filling a rather high official position, a well-wisher to our cause, helped me to this. I owe much to him; but as I do not know whether he be still living or not, I dare not give his name, nor particulars of my relations with him, for fear of harm ensuing to himself. It is our rule never to speak fully about noble deeds done on behalf of revolutionists or the revolutionary movement unless the doers are either dead or in exile. I can only say that through this friend I was

able to send letters to my comrades, and that he kept me informed of all that might interest me in external events. I learned, among other things, that the well-known revolutionists then living in exile in Paris—Peter Lavrov, Lopàtin, and Tihomìrov—had held a council upon the conduct of Degàiev[1]—then also in Paris—and had come to the conclusion that though certainly, in assisting to "remove" Soudyèhkin, Degàiev had rendered a service to the revolutionary cause, yet that he must refrain unconditionally from any further participation in our movement, and from associating in any way with revolutionists. I learned also that a young girl of twenty, Maria Kalyùshnaya,[2] had attempted to shoot Colonel Katànsky of the gendarmerie in his own house, but had not been successful. About a fortnight before my removal to Odessa she had been tried before a court-martial; and as she was not of age, had "only" been sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude in Siberia.

[1] See note, p. 43. [2] See later, chapters xvii, xix, xxi, xxvi, etc.

CHAPTER X

A BRAVE OFFICER—MY MILITARY SERVICE—THE TRIAL—FURTHER EXAMINATIONS

ON one of the first days of my imprisonment in Odessa I had a small passage-at-arms. I was pacing my cell, when I suddenly heard voices raised outside the door. I went and looked through the peephole. It was the officer of the day on his rounds of inspection, and he seemed to be questioning one of the soldiers about his duties. I was going to draw back again, when the words, "Get away from there, you scoundrel!" struck my ears; and only after a moment did I realise they were addressed to me. I was extremely surprised, for the officers generally behaved quite politely to the "politicals."

I instantly withdrew from the door without a word, but I resolved to teach this gentleman a lesson in manners. So that evening, when the deputy-governor paid his usual visit to my cell, accompanied by the officer, without appearing to notice the latter I asked if prisoners were forbidden to look through the peephole.

"No, of course not," said the deputy-governor. "How could anyone prevent you?"

"Then, will you please tell me if a prisoner should be abused by an officer for doing so?"

"Certainly not."

I then related what had occurred, and requested the official to give me particulars in writing next morning

as to this officer's name and position, so that I should know how to state my complaint about him.

Next day my gendarme told me this promising young lieutenant had been round more than once during the night, telling him and the policeman what they were to say if there were any inquiry. Evidently the young fellow was in some trepidation, as he had thus humbled himself before his inferiors. I felt rather sorry for him, and thinking he had a sufficient warning, I took no further steps in the matter.

My case, meanwhile, was running its course. About the middle of September the examining magistrate read me the document that was the outcome of his labours. According to paragraph so-and-so of the statute-book, it set forth, he must hand me over to the Prosecutor of the Military Court. I at once entered a protest, calling attention to the extradition treaty, which enjoined my being tried by the ordinary civil law, not by any special tribunal. Whereupon the magistrate showed me a paper, in which the Minister of Justice informed him that after the conclusion of the examination he must act according to such and such a paragraph, which enacted that crimes committed by any person belonging to the army must be dealt with by a court-martial.

"When the crime of which you are accused was committed," said the magistrate, "you were serving in the army."

This makes another retrospective digression necessary, that I may tell the reader something about my youth and my brief military career.

Led by the spirit of the times and my own convictions, I had donned peasant's dress and gone "among the people," to return home in the autumn of 1875 disenchanted and discouraged after my propagandist efforts. Like many youths of those days, I was filled with im-

petuous longings. I wanted to use my young strength, and yearned after great deeds; but what I should begin upon I hardly knew.

When I returned from my campaign I found very few of my old companions in Kiëv. Some were in prison, others were scattered to the four winds. It was just at this time that insurrections had broken out in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Numbers of young men, among whom were many Socialists, had joined the volunteer corps, and I found a very warlike spirit abroad. The fight for freedom on the heights of the Balkans was the topic of the day. A youth of twenty was naturally carried away by this tide; and I was preparing to go off to the war and fight in the struggle to release an oppressed people from the Turkish yoke, but I was too late, the waves were retreating. Volunteers wrote from the scene of action letters that were only disheartening. The situation was of such a nature that young people—for the most part not inured to the hardships of guerilla warfare—were not only useless, but an encumbrance to the fighters; and our friends advised that no more such should be sent out. So I had to give up my project.

However, I had got the war fever, and was altogether at a loose end; so I resolved to serve my time in the Russian Army as a volunteer, although it was a year sooner than was necessary. Doubtless I was moved to this partly by the consideration that as a soldier I should have opportunities of continuing my propagandist work, and also by the thought that military training might be of use to me hereafter.

According to the then existing regulations I had only six months to serve as a volunteer of the second class. Thus it came about that in the end of October, 1875, I became a private soldier in the 130th regiment of infantry at Kiëv. But it also happened that only four months later I had to leave the service, as I will now explain. One of my friends, a student named Semen

Luryè, implicated in the "Case of the 193,"[1] was at this time imprisoned at Kiëv. The all-powerful adjutant of gendarmerie, Baron Gèhkin, had borrowed large sums of money from the parents of Luryè, and thanks to this circumstance the prisoner was allowed opportunities for escaping. I rendered him some assistance in his flight, and suspicion falling upon me, my dwelling was searched by the gendarmes. My arrest seemed imminent; and being a soldier, I should have been brought before a court-martial, which in those days of heavy sentences would have sealed my fate, so I went into hiding until the intentions of the gendarmerie should become clear. In a few days it was evident that Baron Gèhkin (who might come in for a good deal of blame, as he had allowed the fugitive many favours) would be sure to hush the thing up, so far as possible. It therefore seemed my simplest plan to report myself again on duty, when I should be punished for five days' absence without leave, but at worst not very severely. Things, however, turned out differently. My regiment belonged to the 33rd division, at the head of which was Vannòvsky, later Minister of War, and subsequently of Education. He hated the volunteers; and I, who by no means took kindly to subordination and discipline, was not in his good books. As ill-luck would have it, just at the time of my absence the General had ordered up my battalion of volunteers; so when I now reported myself I was taken straight to him, and he sent me off at once to headquarters for trial. I was accused of desertion; and over and above that I had brought upon myself a charge of insulting an officer on duty, because I had objected to being called "thou" and roughly handled by the officer on guard. The affair looked rather bad for me, and flight seemed the only remedy. I succeeded in making good my escape with the help of two

[1] One of the monster trials of revolutionists undertaken by the Russian Government at that period. More than 1,000 persons were implicated in it.—*Trans.*

of my comrades, who brought me civilian's clothes into the bath-house. I dressed myself in them, and passed the sentry at the door unrecognised. This was in February, 1876, from which time until the autumn of 1877 I was free, but an "illegal," as I have already said. In the autumn of 1877 I was again arrested, as related in chapter i., and in the following spring I once more escaped.

To return to my present narrative. I made two protests against the magistrate's decision to send me before a court-martial: one directed to the president of the Military Court in Odessa, and one to Nabòkov, the Minister of Justice. I called Bogdanòvitch to witness that the Government of Baden had only surrendered me on condition that I should be brought before an ordinary court, and tried by civil, not martial law. If a military court were to try me for desertion and insulting an officer, that would be against the conditions of the treaty, which laid down that I should only be answerable on the Gorinòvitch count.

As was to be foreseen, my petitions were set aside without further parley; and soon after, my indictment, signed by the Public Prosecutor of the Courts-martial, was put before me. This indictment left me in no doubt as to what kind of trial I was to have. Certainly the facts relating to the assault on Gorinòvitch were given; but nothing whatever was said as to the motives, nor as to the circumstances that led to it. Of course, the prosecutor had not failed to make use of the most stringent articles in the Russian Criminal Code. The heaviest punishment authorised therein (for parricide and such-like crimes) is penal servitude for life, and it was the very article dealing with that sentence which was cited in my case. According to the law this penalty is capable of various degrees of mitigation under certain extenuating circumstances: *e.g.* it may be reduced to twenty years'

penal servitude when the victim of the assault survives, even though against the intention of his assailant; and further, the term of years is to be shortened by a third if the perpetrator be under age at the date of the crime. In accordance with this, the Public Prosecutor asked for thirteen years and four months as my sentence, that being the maximum penalty to which I could be liable under the terms of the extradition treaty. Even then, the proclamation made at the time of Alexander III.'s accession might come into consideration; by it judges were authorised to remit the punishments for any crime committed before the date of the proclamation. In my case there was no hope of this permission being used; and I looked upon this whole travesty of justice as a formality which had to be gone through, but otherwise of no significance. I therefore declined the assistance of the advocate assigned to me (some candidate for a military post), and prepared to endure the unpleasant ordeal as best I could.

The day of the trial came. A great van with barred windows rumbled into the prison yard. I was put into it, a sergeant of police took his seat beside me, and the door was fastened outside with a mighty padlock. The gendarme who had been so long my companion in captivity mounted the box; a company of infantry escorted us, and the cortège was finally surrounded by Cossacks on horseback. The Chief of Police led the van, and a commissary of police formed the rearguard. It might have been supposed that at least a dozen robber chiefs, each with his horde of banditti, were being transported through the town. As we passed along the streets this unusual procession aroused the attention of the public, and I saw people crowding to the windows. Meanwhile I chatted quietly with the police-sergeant. It seemed that he had been on duty in Kiëv twenty years before, and knew my family.

"Who would have thought that little Deutsch I often used to see would ever come to this!" said he, and began

following up old recollections, talking of my father and our house. My thoughts flew back over the years, and scenes of my childhood rose before me.

The court was filled with a carefully selected "public," consisting of officers and their womenfolk, people connected with the law, and other representatives of the official world. The examination of the witnesses produced nothing of any interest. Most of those originally called were either dead or had disappeared, and those few who did attend made inconclusive statements, their memories being vague after the lapse of eight years—some, indeed, refused to answer on that account. The principal witness, Gorinòvitch himself, for some reason did not appear, but his deposition was read. I on my side took little part in the proceedings, and had renounced my right to call witnesses for the defence. But I was moved and excited; the large audience, mostly hostile, that gazed on me worked on my feelings. I sought for a familiar face, but saw nobody I knew except the Public Prosecutor of the Civil Courts, who had conducted my examination in prison.

After the hearing of witnesses the Military Prosecutor took up his parable. His speech was a verbal reiteration of the formal indictment which I had already seen. All my interest was to hear what motives he would assign. As he could impute to me neither "selfish ends" nor "personal hatred," he gave "revenge" as the reason of the assault; but of course he had to abstain carefully from suggesting any motive for this "revenge," as he dared not mention the word "political." The order to keep dark at all costs the political character of the case led to perfectly irreconcilable accounts of what happened. The Public Prosecutor informed the court that I had been arrested in 1877, and had made such and such admissions in the course of examination, but that I had subsequently "withdrawn" from justice. He dared not say that I had escaped from prison at Kiëv; and it was still funnier when he had

to explain that I had "withdrawn" from my military service.

I began my defence by the declaration that I had no desire to plead for any mitigation of sentence, as was proved by my not denying that I had fully intended to kill Gorinòvitch, though there was no proof of this save my own avowal.[1] I was ready to face the consequences, and my only wish was that the story should be truthfully told, that things might appear in their true light. With that in view I would put clearly before the court the reasons why my comrades and I had come to the resolution of putting Gorinòvitch to death. Scarcely, however, had I uttered the words, "We had formed a 'circle' in Elisavetgrad," than the presiding general, Grodèkov, interrupted me with the observation that under the conditions of the trial I must refrain from any allusion to political offences.

Of course, under such terms a true exposition of the real character of the affair could not possibly be made, the events could not even be narrated with any coherence. For instance, when I began again, "While Gorinòvitch was in prison in Kiëv," the president stopped me instantly, and said that was out of order; and though I then carefully avoided mentioning names of persons or places, or any political occurrence, I was continually interrupted by the president, and threatened with being silenced altogether or removed from court. I really did not see how to put things so as to make out the simplest statement; and I soon concluded this so-called speech of defence, in which I was not allowed to defend myself, and scarcely to speak. Even then the Military Prosecutor carried the comedy so far as to wax indignant over my "contradictory statements." I answered him briefly, and declined to make any concluding remarks.

The deliberation of the court was very short, and the

[1] Grave bodily injury without intent to kill was only punishable with four or five years' hard labour, to be diminished by one-third in the case of minors.

sentence was of course in accordance with the Public Prosecutor's demand—thirteen years and four months' penal servitude.

I was then escorted back to prison; and although I had always expected this sentence, I felt in a certain sense relieved as if a weight had fallen from my shoulders. Everything was now settled once for all. Uncertainty, as I have said, is a prisoner's hardest trial; and I had only now to wonder whither I should be sent. As I had been tried as an ordinary criminal, I might be despatched to Kara, in Siberia, where were old friends and acquaintances of mine, and where the prison life was comparatively bearable. Or they could send me to the island of Saghalien, where—as all Russia knows—the conditions are horrible. But what frightened me most of all was the thought that the Government (who by having to stick more or less to the extradition treaty had been prevented from sentencing me to such a severe punishment as they would have liked) might still find some excuse for aggravating my penalty, and send me to be buried alive in the Schlüsselburg fortress. The building of that prison had just been finished, and everyone was saying that as it was intended for the most dangerous of the "politicals," a murderously cruel régime was to be enforced there.

A week after the trial the president of the court-martial came to inform me officially of the sentence. I was taken into the office, where General Grodèkov had entrenched himself behind a wide table, so that he was well separated from me; but even so he commanded the sentries to stand between us with fixed bayonets, and seemed terribly apprehensive of what I might do to him. I was much amused, and my guards were very contemptuous, as I gathered from their subsequent comments while I was being taken back to my cell. Indeed, I have never seen any civilian take so many precautions when speaking with a convict as this seasoned warrior thought necessary.

Although the proceedings against me were concluded, I

still had to undergo further examinations, but in the character of a witness. First there appeared one day a captain of gendarmerie, accompanied by the Public Prosecutor. He addressed the following question to me:—

"A letter was found in your cell at Freiburg; it contained an address. You were to arrange for the despatch of books from this address. Can you tell me what the books were, and who was the writer of the letter? And remember," he continued, "that through our possession of this address a number of persons in Vilna have been arrested. If you will tell us who was the actual writer, the others will be set at liberty."

I knew this trick well enough, and replied calmly—

"You seem to think it not dishonourable to reveal the names of one's correspondents. I cannot agree with you."

The young man looked embarrassed, and hastily brought our interview to an end.

It was true that the authorities in Baden had consented to give up all my papers to the Russian Government; an excess of zeal they might well have spared, for in consequence many absolutely innocent people were molested by the secret police. I myself was to blame, having unfortunately omitted to destroy this address when I was sorting my papers with Professor Thun.

Another time I was called up by an examining magistrate, who showed me a letter from the Ministry of Justice, instructing him to examine me concerning some events connected with the murder of General Mezentzev. He read me the deposition of a certain Goldenberg; according to which I had met Goldenberg one day in the horse-market of Kharkov, and had mentioned to him that it was S. Kravtchinsky[1] who had stabbed the chief of gendarmerie.

I did indeed recollect walking in the horse-market with Goldenberg, and that he had told me how he himself had

[1] Well known to English readers by his assumed name of Stepniak. See later, chap. xxv.—*Trans.*

in that very place killed the governor of Kharkov, Prince Kropotkin. Whether I had said anything about the part played by Kravtchinsky in the assault on Mezentzev I could not remember. The thought shot through my mind that Kravtchinsky had perhaps been captured abroad like myself, and that the Russian Government were wanting to get him extradited too. The statement of Goldenberg, which only repeated the words of another, was not sufficient evidence for that, and they desired my testimony in addition. I therefore did not refuse to speak on this occasion, but made a statement tending to counteract that of Goldenberg. I told them I had certainly talked to Goldenberg about the assassination; but that I had merely mentioned rumours which ascribed the deed sometimes to me, sometimes to Kravtchinsky. Fortunately my alarm was unnecessary: Kravtchinsky was already in London and out of danger.

CHAPTER XI

THE VISIT OF THE MINISTER—I AM TURNED INTO A CONVICT—THE PRISON AT KIËV

SHORTLY after my trial a feverish anxiety set in at the Odessa prison: the Minister of Justice was expected. Of course, everything except the straw and the tub was taken out of my cell; and one day the great man appeared, attended by an imposing suite—the governor of the town among the rest. As soon as Nabòkov saw me he greeted me by name, which seemed to excite the governor's interest in no small degree.

"Your Excellency is pleased to recognise Deutsch?"

"Oh yes; we have met in Petersburg," answered Nabòkov in an agreeable tone, as if recalling a meeting in some elegant drawing-room instead of in a prison. He then turned to me, to tell me that he had received my petition, and had "reported to His Majesty"; but the Tsar had pronounced that as a former member of the army I must go before a court-martial, and therefore that had been the only course. The manner in which I was lodged seemed to strike the minister unpleasantly, for he looked round my cell, and asked if I were properly treated and had no complaints to make. I now learned that my transference to Moscow was decided on; that I was to winter there, and remain until the journey to Siberia was possible.

The way in which the minister had spoken to me seemed to have made a powerful impression on the prison authorities; for scarcely had "His Excellency" left the place

than the governor hastened to my cell, and took me to one much more comfortable, where were a good bed, a table, and a chair.

"A report has been made to His Majesty himself about you!" I was therefore a person of consequence, and the governor's official soul was troubled. I was offered books from a lending library, and was henceforth treated with marked civility. Of course, I knew that this alteration really proceeded from orders given by the three functionaries spoken of in a previous chapter, who had been the cause of my former ill-treatment. This is a striking example of the arbitrary way in which prisoners are used.

I had not much longer to enjoy these marks of favour. A fortnight later I was informed that a party of convicts would start for Moscow that evening. I was to accompany them, and accordingly must assume the convict garb. After eighteen years I think of that day with a shudder.

First of all, I was taken into a room where was stored everything necessary to the equipment of a convict under sentence. On the floor lay piles of chains; and clothes, boots, etc., were heaped on shelves. From among them some were selected that were supposed to fit me; and I was then conducted to a second room. Here the right side of my head was shaved, and the hair on the left side cut short. I had seen people in the prison who had been treated in this fashion, and the sight had always made a painful impression on me, as indeed it does on everyone. But when I saw my own face in the glass a cold shudder ran down my spine, and I experienced a sensation of personal degradation to something less than human. I thought of the days—in Russia not so long ago—when criminals were branded with hot irons.

A convict was waiting ready to fasten on my fetters. I was placed on a stool, and had to put my foot on an anvil. The blacksmith fitted an iron ring round each ankle, and welded it together. Every stroke of the

hammer made my heart sink, as I realised that a new existence was beginning for me.

The mental depression into which I now fell was soon accompanied by physical discomfort. The fetters at first caused me intolerable pain in walking, and even disturbed my sleep. It also requires considerable practice before one can easily manage to dress and undress. The heavy chains—about 13 lbs. in weight—are not only an encumbrance, but are very painful, as they chafe the skin round the ankles; and the leather lining is but little protection to those unaccustomed to these adornments. Another great torment is the continual clinking of the chains. It is indescribably irritating to the nervous, and reminds the prisoner at every turn that he is a pariah among his kind, "deprived of all rights."

The transformation is completed by the peculiar convict dress, consisting—besides the coarse linen underclothing—of a grey gown made of special material, and a pair of trousers. Prisoners condemned to hard labour wear a square piece of yellow cloth sewn on their gowns. The feet are clad in leathern slippers nicknamed "cats." All these articles of clothing are inconvenient, heavy, and ill-fitting.

I hardly knew myself when I looked in the glass and beheld a fully attired convict. The thought possessed me —"For long years you will have to go about in that hideous disguise." Even the gendarme regarded me with compassion.

"What won't they do to a man?" he said. And I could only try to comfort myself by thinking how many unpleasant things one gets used to, and that time might perhaps accustom one even to this.

My own clothes I gave away to the warders, and any possessions of value—watch, ring, cigarette-case—I sent by post to relations. I kept only my books. I had been given a bag in which to keep a change of linen; and into it I also put a few volumes of Shakespeare, Goethe, Heine,

Molière, and Rousseau, thus completing my preparations for travelling.

Evening came. The officer in command of the convoy appeared in the prison courtyard with his men and took the party in charge. I was conducted to the office. A *statyehny spìsok*[1] is prepared for each individual convict, in which his name and place of exile are entered, and also a list of the exciseable things he takes with him. In the *statyehny spìsok* of each political prisoner his photograph is pasted, and in mine there were two.

The officer carefully went through all these *dossiers*. We were then arranged in processional order. The soldiers surrounded us; the officer lifted his cap and crossed himself.

"A pleasant journey! Good-bye!" called out the prison officials.

"Thanks. Good-bye!" cried the officer. He then gave the signal to start, and off we marched at a slow pace to the station.

On account of the conditions attached by the Grand Duke of Baden to my extradition, I had till now been treated sometimes as an ordinary criminal, sometimes as a "political"; but from the moment I joined this convoy I was treated frankly as a "political."[2] This being so, I was not placed among the ordinary criminals when we reached the train, but was put in the compartment reserved for the escort. Here there was a fair amount of room, and one could be pretty comfortable, while the others were packed like herrings in a barrel; but, on the other hand, the society of the soldiers was not very enlivening, as they dared not exchange a word with me in presence of the officer.

[1] Literally "a list of particulars."—*Trans.*

[2] The Russian Government has a twofold reason for making this careful distinction between ordinary and political prisoners after conviction. Firstly, in order that the supervision of the latter shall be stricter, and that they may be prevented from influencing the ordinary prisoners; and secondly, because the "politicals" were originally only recruited from the upper and privileged classes, and the tradition remains.

After four-and-twenty hours we arrived at Kiëv, where we were to have a day's rest. We got out of the train, were formed up in procession, encircled by the soldiers, and marched by a roundabout way through the suburbs to the prison.

A strange emotion possessed me, when, after years of wandering both in Russia and abroad, I once again passed through the streets of my native town. I had not been here since I had fled from prison in 1878, six years before; and now I returned in chains, with the ominous yellow diamond on my back, a convict doomed to years of exile.

"Get on, get on! Mind what you're about!" I heard a rough voice say, and felt a poke in my back from the butt-end of a rifle.

"This is the beginning," I thought, and pictured all the humiliation and suffering that lay before me. However, the officer had remarked the incident, and coming up, reprimanded the soldier who had hustled me.

When we came to the prison gate the convicts were told off one by one like sheep, and let through the door in turn. I was taken straight to the office. Here everything was altered, and everywhere faces were strange to me. Fat old Captain Kovàlsky was gone, and the rest of the staff had been changed too.

"It was from this prison you escaped?" asked a haughty-looking man in uniform, the new governor, Simàshko. I assented.

"Ah, you managed that very cunningly!" said he, laughing.

In reality the thing had been very simple. One of my comrades, named Frolènko, had provided himself with a false passport, and had got employment in the prison; one night he took Stefanòvitch, Bohanòvsky and me away disguised as warders.[1]

[1] The story of this escape has been told by Professor Thun, in his history of the Russian revolutionary movement (*Geschichte der revolutionären Bewegung in Russland*), and also by Stepniak (*Underground Russia: Two*

After the usual formalities I was led away to my cell, and as I passed along the corridors I noticed that structural alterations had been made everywhere. The cell in which I was installed was unusually large, and was almost filled up by the wooden bedshelves; apparently it was generally used for a large number of prisoners temporarily confined there, and had now been assigned for my sole occupation, so that I might not be left among the other convicts.

The prison of Kiëv has an interesting history in connexion with the "politicals." Many episodes—not always entirely tragic—in the revolutionary movement have taken place there; indeed, in that respect scarcely any other Russian prison except the Fortress of Peter and Paul can equal it. Above all, it has been the scene of frequent escapes. Besides us Tchigirìners, in the same year the student Isbìtsky and an Englishman named Beverley

Escapes), who had it from Bohanòvsky; but the readers of the present volume may like to have it repeated with more detail than our author has thought fit to give.

When Stefanòvitch, Deutsch, and Bohanòvsky were imprisoned at Kiëv, Frolènko contrived to obtain work in the prison as a sort of odd man under the name of Michael. He gradually rose to be warder, first in the criminal and then in the "political" department, where, in spite of a feigned protest made by his three friends (who did not wish to appear on good terms with him), he was appointed to their corridor. They lost no time in fixing a night for their escape together; and having obtained two suits of private clothes and a warder's dress for the prisoners to put on, he let them out of their cells at midnight. As they were creeping along the dark passages one of them stumbled against something, at which he grasped to save himself from falling. Instantly a deafening noise woke the echoes, he had clutched the rope of the alarm bell! "Michael" hastened off to explain to the staff that he had accidentally caught at the rope, and luckily this sufficed to satisfy everyone. As soon as all was quiet again he collected his companions from the corners where they had hidden, and all proceeded safely to the entrance, where the key was handed to "Michael" without a question. They stepped out of the prison almost into the arms of an officer; but he proved to be their comrade Osslnsky, who had been organising the affair, and who now conducted them to the river, where a boat with provisions was ready for them. They travelled up the Dnieper for a week, concealing themselves in the long rushes of the bank if a steamer came in sight; and they finally reached Kremutshy, where Osslnsky furnished them with passports and money. "Michael" was for long supposed by the Kiëv prison officials to have been made away with by the escaping prisoners.—*Trans.*

attempted an escape. They had scooped out a tunnel under the wall, and were actually already free, when a sentinel espied them and fired. The Englishman fell dead, and Isbìtsky was caught. Four years later another student, named Basil Ivànov, escaped with the help of the officer in command of the guard, a certain Tìhonov, a member of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*. Shortly before my arrival, Vladìmir Bìtshkov also disappeared from Kiëv prison in a very mysterious way; and so far as I know a certain much-esteemed authority has to this day not solved the riddle of that, and is probably still racking his brains over it. Finally, in August, 1902, eleven "very important" prisoners escaped from Kiëv, nine of them having been arrested early in the year, and two the year before. These prisoners were allowed to take exercise every evening in the prison courtyard, in presence of only one warder. They and their friends knew that one of the surrounding outer walls, beyond which were fields, was unguarded on the outside. They were provided secretly with an iron anchor weighing twenty pounds, and with an improvised ladder made of strips of sheets. At a given moment some of the prisoners muffled and gagged the guard, and tied him up before he could give the alarm. In the meantime others formed themselves into a living pyramid, and thus managed to fix their anchor to the top of the prison wall, so that they could fasten to it their ladder for ascending and a rope for descending on the other side. That after they were actually free they could manage to hide in the town, and afterwards all get away safely, was due to the sympathy of the general public, many members of which not only helped the fugitives by deed, but also subscribed together a considerable sum to assist the escape. It is noteworthy that from first to last in this affair no one was killed or hurt, nor a drop of blood shed.

But these prison walls have also w'tnessed sadder scenes. Many revolutionists have passed their last hours within

them, waiting to be led to the scaffold. Still greater is the number of those who have left this place to tread the path to exile and the Siberian prisons. Only the Fortress of Peter and Paul, the gaol at Odessa, and perhaps the Warsaw citadel, can for memories like these compare with the prison of Kiëv. Here too, more than anywhere else, have conflicts taken place between the imprisoned revolutionists and the authorities. The tradition as to these occurrences remains unbroken; every "political" cherishes the memory of the "old times"—*i.e.* the exceptionally stormy years 1877–9. The young generation speaks of them as the "heroic ages"; and not only the prison staff, but even the ordinary criminals (who are employed here in the domestic labour of the place), relate stories of them. The authorities have never succeeded in uprooting the independent spirit that flourishes within these precincts, and the door had hardly closed behind me when I had a proof of it.

"The 'politicals' beg that you will be so kind as to write down your name, in what case you are implicated, and where you were sentenced," I heard a voice at the door say. I stepped nearer, and saw it proceeded from one of the ordinary criminals, who was speaking through the peephole. When I answered that I had nothing on which to write, he instantly produced a pencil and a bit of paper, and poked them through to me.

I stated shortly who I was, and begged my comrades to let me know in return who and how many they were, and concerned in what cases. The same man came back almost immediately with a reply, which ended with the words: "You will soon hear particulars verbally from our ladies."

And sure enough I soon heard a woman's voice bidding me climb up to the window. I did so; but as I then found that there was no way of opening it, I wasted no time, simply proceeding to smash two panes of the double windows. Outside stood two ladies, wives of

political prisoners, by name Paraskovya Shebalina[1] and Vitolda Rechnyèvskaia. They were taking exercise in the courtyard of the women's quarters, and my window being close to the wall separating the two yards, we could easily communicate. I thus heard full details about the imprisoned "politicals," who were not few in number, as a trial had just taken place in the Kiëv courts, at which twelve persons had been sentenced: four of them, including Shebalìn, to penal servitude, and his wife to exile, on the sole ground that in their house type had been discovered with which a pamphlet was to be secretly printed. We were, however, suddenly interrupted in our talk by the appearance of the assistant governor.

"What's all this? You've broken the window?"

"Yes," said I; "why haven't you proper fastenings, so that they could be opened?"

"Well, you will suffer for it; you will be frozen with cold to-night." And in fact there was a sharp November frost. He then turned to the two ladies, and bade them go away, as it was entirely against rules to wait about at the door. Here, however, he met his match; for the two turned on him, requesting him to be off himself, and not disturb us. Paraskovya Shebalina especially was most energetic in her treatment of him. She was a lively and charming young lady, whom the atmosphere of a prison had rendered so nervously excitable that the mere sight of an official would send her into a passion, which led to endless contests.

Vitolda Rechnyèvskaia shared the captivity of her husband. They were a very young couple, married only a few days before their arrest. Thaddeus Rechnyèvsky[2] was twenty-one years of age; he had just left the school of jurisprudence in Petersburg University when he was

[1] Surnames in Russian take the feminine termination when used for a woman. It will be noticed below that the husbands of these two ladies are called Shebalìn and Rechnyèvsky.—*Trans.*

[2] See portraits, pp. 259 and 260.

arrested, and was now (1884) under examination as to his association with the Polish Socialist "proletarian" party, whose members were prosecuted at Warsaw in 1885.

Besides the above mentioned, who were either condemned to banishment or still under examination, there were in the prison a number of people who were to be exiled by "administrative methods." There had been riots in Kiëv University shortly before this, in consequence of which the University was closed, and many of the students were imprisoned.

New facts and impressions crowded upon me, and it was late before I lay down. I threw over the plank-bed the sheepskin that had been given me, and covered myself with my great-coat. The night was frightfully cold, and the wind whistled through the broken window. I put my bag under my head, but the French and German classics it contained did not make a very comfortable pillow, and it was long ere I slept. Suddenly I was awakened by a terrific hullabaloo. I ran to the door, and called to the warder to know what was happening. After some time he turned up, and I learned that the criminals in the next room had been having a tussle; one of them had hidden away a few roubles, and the others having seen it, had tried to murder and rob him. He had succeeded in keeping them at bay and calling for help.

"That's the way that lot always go on!" remarked the warder composedly, and returned to his post and his nap. There were no further consequences of the scrimmage; with an "I'll teach you!" the warder had separated the combatants, and the thing was at an end. He never even reported the occurrence, it was such an everyday event.

Next morning the governor came hurrying to me, and said that the colonel of gendarmerie was coming to visit me. This was Novitsky; I did not know him personally, but many amusing stories were told about him in our circles. He arrived, accompanied by his adjutant, put the usual question—"Have you any complaint to make?"—

and then began to chat. It was pure curiosity that had brought him. I remember he wanted to know if, when abroad, I had come across Debagòrio-Makriyèvitch, who had been imprisoned at Kiëv in 1879 and condemned to penal servitude; but on his way to Siberia had "swopped" with one of the ordinary criminals, and so escaped. When I said I had seen him in Switzerland, Novitsky overwhelmed me with questions: "Now tell me, how is Vladimir Kàrpovitch? What is he doing over there?" One would have thought Makriyèvitch was at least one of his relations; he spoke of him familiarly by his Christian name and his father's name.[1] Like Colonel Ivànov in Petersburg, who had known my old companions, he too went off into praises of them; though all the while he was doing what he could to bring two of Makriyèvitch's comrades to the scaffold.[2] They are easy-going people, these ornaments of officialdom!

[1] It should be remembered that in private intercourse Russians do not use their family names, but the Christian name combined with the Christian name of the father, *e.g.* Vladimir Kàrpovitch—Vladimir, son of Kàrpo, the same man's family name being Debagòrio-Makriyèvitch.

[2] Antònov and Brantner, besides Osslnsky and some of the others whose names I have mentioned above.

CHAPTER XII

NEW ACQUAINTANCES — THE GIRL-CONSPIRATORS OF ROMNY — ARRIVAL IN MOSCOW — COMPANIONS IN DESTINY—A LIBERAL-MINDED GOVERNOR

NEXT morning I was taken to the office, where arrangements were being made for the continuation of our journey. When formalities were over the governor said to me that I had better go into the next room : "You will find company there—comrades of yours who are to travel to Moscow with you."

In my conversation with the two ladies they had told me that two exiles, banished by "administrative methods," Vladimir Malyòvany and Anna Ptshèlkina, were to travel with me; and I was very glad to make acquaintance with my future companions. I had known Malyòvany by name for some time past. He had once been secretary to the Town Council of Odessa, had been exiled to Siberia by "administrative methods" in the end of the seventies, after some years had made his escape, and was now being sent back to Siberia again for five years.[1]

When I entered the room I found there two well-dressed young ladies, a middle-aged gentleman with a black beard, and an officer in full uniform. One of the ladies stood close by the door, and I held out my hand to greet her; but she drew back and stared at me, looking surprised and rather alarmed. Evidently she took me for some bold criminal! Smiling, I gave my name; and the girl in-

[1] This sentence was renewed later, and in 1892 he died in hospital at Tomsk.

stantly grasped my hand, and shook it warmly with many apologies. She was Anna Ptshèlkina's sister, come to say farewell to the exile. "I really am afraid of you!" she said, with a friendly glance, smiling rather shamefacedly.

The black-bearded man was Malyòvany. The other lady, with a delicate-looking but sympathetic and expressive face, was Anna Ptshèlkina, who was being sent to Western Siberia for three years. The officer was Captain Vòlkov, commanding our convoy. We exiles were naturally friends directly, and at once engaged in eager conversation. With my shaven head, clattering fetters, and convict's dress, I contrasted oddly with the others, who looked civilised and respectable. In the faces of the two sisters, especially in that of the younger, I plainly read the most romantic interest in my fate. Probably she now for the first time beheld a Socialist, stamped outwardly as a criminal and deprived of all civil rights, going forth to a gloomy future. She begged me, if there were any special thing I would like to have, to write it down; and handed me a pencil and paper that she might keep my note as a reminder. I wrote down the titles of some mathematical text-books, and she promised to send them; but she either forgot all about it, or lost my elegant autograph—at all events, the books never arrived.

Malyòvany and Anna Ptshèlkina were then taken in a carriage to the station, while I—though also invited to drive—preferred to go on foot. So I marched with the rest of the party, rattling my chains, along the streets of my native town. When, and under what circumstances, should I see it again?

We were taken straight to the railway carriage engaged for us by the organisers of the convoy, while a compartment was reserved for the officer. We settled ourselves comfortably, and the train started. I now asked my companions the reason of their banishment, and learned from

them that—as in many other instances described to me by people who had similarly been exiled to Siberia by "administrative methods"—they had simply been accused by the police of being *neblàgonadyèshny, i.e.* untrustworthy. This word has become classical in Russian police affairs, and has a conveniently vague signification. Literally it means "of whom nothing good can be expected." A young man or a girl associates with So-and-so, reads such and such books; this is enough to awaken suspicion that the said young man or girl is "untrustworthy." The police or the gendarmerie pay a domiciliary visit, find a suspicious letter or a prohibited book, and then the course of events is certain: arrest, imprisonment, Siberia. It may be scarcely credible that people languish for years in prison, without any pretence of legal procedure against them, simply by decree of an officer of gendarmerie; and that at the good pleasure of these officers—most of them fabulously ignorant men—people are banished to the wilds of Siberia. Even those familiar with Russian affairs are often shocked and staggered by some fresh case of this kind.

As we were nearing a large station the officer informed us that we should be joined here by some more political exiles; and when the train came to a standstill, two quite young girls—at the most eighteen to twenty years of age—and two youths were brought into our carriage. We three who came from Kiëv were by no means aged; but we might almost have been called old folks by these children. We received the new-comers cordially, and of course begged for their story, which was as follows.

In the district of Poltava the chief town is a small place called Romny, and in this little town there is a girls' school. Two or three of the scholars hit upon the idea of lending one another books, and making notes on them—not books that were in any way forbidden, but that were accessible to all. Soon a few young men joined them; and thus a small reading society was formed, such as might help to

pass away the long winter evenings in the dull little provincial town. As these young people had no idea that they were committing any offence, they naturally never dreamt of keeping their proceedings secret. But the eye of the law is sleepless! The officer commanding the gendarmerie in that place saw and triumphed. For years he had been vegetating in this obscure corner of the empire, and had never unearthed the least little conspiracy, nor brought to light a secret society; now was his chance. He could at last make manifest his burning zeal, his devotion to his country and his Tsar; and recognition by his superiors, perhaps an order or promotion, shone before him. One night the gendarmerie paid domiciliary visits to the dwellings of the young ladies of the school. Certainly nothing suspicious was found, but the frightened girls "confessed" that they had "held meetings," and that they read books in a "society." This was enough for the brave sergeant; here were grounds for the State to take action against the "secret society of Romny." The girls and their friends were arrested and imprisoned; a report was sent to Petersburg about the discovery of a secret society, in which such and such persons had taken part, and discussed "social questions" together; the officer was of opinion that these evildoers should be sent to Siberia;—and the thing was done.

When these boys and girls told me their simple tale and explained the nature of their "crimes," unflattering as was my opinion of legal proceedings in Russia, I could hardly believe that there was nothing more behind this. Only when I became more closely acquainted with these "conspirators of Romny" and other "criminals" of their class, was I convinced that no suggestion of fancy is too slight and unsubstantial to be formulated as a ground for prosecution and banishment of the most harmless people by the gendarmerie, the secret police, and the other guardians of public safety in Russia.

After having been imprisoned for a considerable time,

these young people were now being exiled to Siberia for three years; but as travelling on the Siberian rivers can only begin in the month of May, they were to pass the winter with us in the Moscow Central Prison for exiles; in other words, they must remain for another six or eight months under lock and key.

"Doesn't this sound like the Inquisition of the Middle Ages?" we said to one another, talking over this specimen of "administrative exile." The officer of the convoy heard us, and there arose a lively discussion, in which, of course, he combated our views on Russian politics. A witness for the crown was soon forthcoming. During our halt at some big station (probably Tula or Oriel) Anna Ptshèlkina opened the barred window to get some air; and a young peasant of about twenty-two or twenty-three who was passing, stopped and stared at the young lady, and cried jeeringly, with a mischievous grimace, "Aha! so you're caught, are you? *Now* you've really got something to grumble at!" We all burst out laughing. How simple was this peasant lad's view of political difficulties! "Caught," "grumble"—the situation was as clear as daylight to his philosophy, and left nothing to be explained. But indeed millions of people, from peasants to the highest dignitaries, make use of the same logic; witness the choice expression of the Public Prosecutor Kotliarèvsky—"Where trees are felled there must be chips." Everything can be summed up and accounted for in this classically simple way; and our officer could add nothing more.

When a few Russians get together, however, their gloomy disquisitions on the terrible state of things prevailing in our country are always varied by enlivening interludes of jokes and harmless chatter, funny stories and witticisms. Malyòvany was in this respect inexhaustible. Like most natives of Little Russia, he had a rich vein of humour, and was a born *raconteur*. No wonder, then, that from the corner in which the soldiers had established us, there frequently issued sounds of irrepressible mirth.

The journey from Kiëv to Moscow took forty-eight hours, but at last we arrived at our goal. I again chose to walk to the prison; Anna Ptshèlkina, Malyòvany, and the Romny youths followed my example, while the girl-conspirators elected to drive. One of them, named Serbìnova, was rather delicate; and the other, Melnikova, clung to her friend with such tender affection that she would not be separated from her for a moment.

It was a lovely winter morning; there was a sharp frost, and the houses and streets of Moscow were white with newly fallen snow. Our fetters rang clearly in the frosty air, and under our feet the snow crackled, as in a long line we marched away to the gaol. We passed by many of those churches and chapels in which "White Moscow" is so rich; and here most of the convicts uncovered their heads and crossed themselves. On the other hand, there were many streets and market-squares which reminded us "politicals" of historic events that had taken place there, which had much in common with our own experiences. Here the Tsars had brought their enemies to execution. There the suspects had been publicly flogged. And now appears "Butirki," as the populace nicknamed the Central Prison for exiles about to be deported. It is a mighty stone building, and looks like a gigantic well; a great wall, with a tower at each of the four corners, encloses it. The main building is reserved for ordinary criminals, who are to be transported to Siberia, and contains accommodation for many thousands. In the high towers are lodged the various classes of "politicals." Those condemned to penal servitude are confined in the Pugatchev tower, which takes its name from the celebrated adversary of Catherine II.; that Pugatchev who wanted to "shake Moscow to its foundations," and was made a show of in an iron cage, till the Tsaritsa sent him to the scaffold. In the north tower were the "administrative" exiles; in the third, or chapel tower, those still under examination; in the fourth the women belonging to all the different categories.

"BUTIRKI," THE CENTRAL PRISON AT MOSCOW

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I was well informed as to the conditions prevailing in this giant prison, from which thousands—if not tens of thousands—of persons of all sorts and conditions are despatched yearly into exile. The reports were not exactly unfavourable, but when we arrived at the door and entered the gloomy edifice, a painful feeling seized on me. Since my arrest in Freiburg—that is, during at least eight months—I had come to know three German and six Russian prisons, and in each there was a different régime. However careless one may be of one's material comfort, one cannot help experiencing an uncomfortable sensation when entering a new place of confinement; knowing that one may be denied the most elementary necessaries, and may perhaps have once more to begin a bitter fight about one's right to exercise, books, a table, or a bedstead.

In the spacious office there awaited us a man of about sixty, with a long white beard, and spectacles on his nose, dressed in a well-worn military coat with officer's epaulettes. This was Captain Maltchèvsky, one of the prison governors, specially charged with the supervision of the political prisoners. After we ourselves and our luggage had been searched in the usual way, we were led off to our respective quarters.

I was first taken through a long, narrow court terminating in a doorway. Here the warder rang a bell; another warder appeared, and conducted us through another narrow court, and up an iron spiral staircase till we reached the third floor. We came to a halt on a dimly lighted landing scarcely a yard and a half wide, with five doors round it. One of these was opened, and I found myself in my cell. A rapid glance showed me that it was not exactly luxurious; it was an irregular triangle in shape, so tiny that one could scarcely take three steps across it, and very little light came through the narrow window. However, it contained a bed and other usual furniture.

"And here I shall have to live for six long months," I thought sadly.

"Good day! Who are you?" said a voice close at hand. It turned out that two prisoners were my neighbours, condemned like me to penal servitude in Siberia. They were concerned in the "trial of the fourteen," or "Vera Figner Case," as we usually called it, and had been sentenced at the same time as myself. We introduced ourselves to one another, and talked through the peepholes in our doors, which did not seem at all to disturb the warder, who was on the landing. He soon after took us out for an airing in the little court I had passed through, which was enclosed within high walls; and as he left us alone here, we could talk as much as we liked to the tune of our clanking fetters while we walked up and down.

I now for the first time saw other political convicts like myself, "deprived of all civil rights" and condemned to penal servitude. It was a strange sight. I noted their youthful but worn faces; both of them wore spectacles, and on their heads were round caps with no brims. With their yellow sheepskins and rattling chains my comrades gave one the impression that they could not be real convicts, but were just dressed up for the part—so great was the contrast between their refined faces and behaviour and this uncouth disguise.

They were about my own age—twenty-nine or thirty. The elder, Athanasius Spandoni-Bosmàndshi, was sentenced to fifteen years' penal servitude; the younger, Vladimir Tchuikòv, to twenty.

Neither of them looked as if he had ever been strong, and both seemed to have suffered much in health during their long imprisonment in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. With their pale, thin faces they looked as if they had just come through a severe illness. But this obvious lack of health had been an advantage to them, as on account of it they had escaped incarceration at Schlüssel-

TCHUIKOV

SPANDONI

VERA FIGNER

STEFANOVITCH

MIRSKY

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burg, to which place their comrades sentenced in the same case had all been sent.

We had not known one another while free; but as we had belonged to the same society, and had worked for the same ends, we met in prison like old comrades. During the first few days our subjects of conversation seemed inexhaustible. We talked during our walks, and also in our cells, where only a small space separated us, so that by speaking through the peepholes we could hear one another perfectly well. My apprehensions on entering this prison were soon quieted; for though the cells were certainly uncomfortable, we gladly put up with that in view of the other ameliorating circumstances.

On one of the first evenings I was sent for to the office, where the old captain awaited me. My comrades had described him to me as very good-natured and obliging, always ready to forward the wishes of the "politicals" whenever possible. He invited me to sit down, and said he wanted to talk quite frankly with me, to which I replied that I should be very glad if he would do so.

"You want to get away," he said; "don't deny it. I know it very well. But I think it right to warn you plainly that any such attempt can only harm yourself and your comrades. We don't want anyone to suffer needlessly here; we do our best to lighten the fate of the prisoners. If there is anything you want, you have only to set it down in black and white" (this I found later was a pet expression of the old man's); "we will send your request to the Governor of Moscow, and he always does what he can to please the prisoners, as far as the law allows him."

Neither before nor since have I ever met an official who spoke so candidly, and his manner inspired confidence. The old man seemed to understand the people with whom he had to deal. He had evidently heard of my two former escapes, and in his diplomatic way hoped to deter me from similar attempts by speaking to me straightforwardly and

convincing me of his own goodwill. This pleased me, and I said to him forthwith that of course every prisoner condemned to penal servitude in Siberia must have a very distinct wish to escape; but that so far as I could see such an idea was quite hopeless in this prison, and I had no intention of making any attempt of the kind. This answer seemed to satisfy the old captain, and we separated with the conviction that we should get on rather well together.

LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XIII

THE TRIAL OF THE FOURTEEN—RECOLLECTIONS OF VERA FIGNER — NUMEROUS IMPRISONMENTS — "AGENTS PROVOCATEURS"

WHEN I told the old governor that I was engaged on no plan of escape, I spoke the simple truth. After my establishment in this prison I felt too much wearied out to think of any such matter. Beyond everything else I wanted rest, to recover myself after the frightful tension of the last months. Naturally the desire for freedom did not leave me; no human being in my circumstances could entirely abandon the thought of it. But it remained for the time being in the background of my consciousness; I felt I had not the energy to strive seriously for its fulfilment.

Time at first passed peacefully and quietly; I read a good deal, and talked with my new friends. What they had to tell was in part new to me, and very interesting. I had known nothing at all about the particulars of their trial. It remains to this day an isolated case, in which nearly all the accused were military or naval officers. Two of them, the naval lieutenant Baron von Stromberg and Lieutenant Rogachev, were executed.[1] What most interested me, however, and will most interest others, was to hear about the heroine of this case, the celebrated Vera

[1] The following were condemned to death, but the sentence was afterwards changed to penal servitude for life: Captains Aschenbrenner and Pohitònov, Second Lieutenant Alex. Tihonòvitch, Ensign Ivan Yuvatchov. And besides these, Vera Figner and Ludmilla Wolkenstein.

Figner.[1] At that time her name was in everyone's mouth, and for long she was the most popular personage in revolutionary circles. All the young people worshipped her; and the stories that were told of her talent for organisation, her astonishing powers of invention, her wonderful perseverance, untiring energy, and boundless readiness for self-sacrifice, testified fully to the part she had played in our movement. The dignified and unselfish conduct of this exceptional woman impressed even the members of the court-martial that tried her.

I had come to know Vera Figner personally in Petersburg, during the year 1877, at a time when she had already adopted the idea of going "among the people." Twenty-two years of age, slender and of striking beauty, she was even then a noteworthy figure among the other prominent women Socialists. Like so many other girls, she had thrown heart and soul into the cause of the Russian peasants, and was ready and willing to sacrifice everything to serve the people.

In the summer of 1879 I again came repeatedly in contact with her. While two years before she had impressed me as a very young propagandist, ready to accept without question the views of her comrades, she had now formed her own independent and keenly logical powers of judgment. As I have previously said, this was a time of hot discussion as to our future programme. Some held the opinion that the whole strength of our party should be concentrated on the terrorist struggle to overthrow the existing machinery of State by attempting the lives of the Tsar and the lesser representatives of despotism. Others contended that revolutionary propaganda ought still to be tried and carried further than hitherto; that revolutionists should work among the people, colonise the villages, and instruct the peasants in the manner of the organisation *Zemlyà i Vòlya* (Land and Freedom). Vera Figner was one of the most strenuous supporters of the former view.

[1] See portrait, p. 112.

I remember well, how once, when our whole circle had met together at Lesnoye, a summer resort near Petersburg, we were arguing hotly with her as to how propaganda among the peasantry might be made to yield the most fruitful results. She had just returned from a small village on the Volga, where she had been living as a peasant, for purposes of propaganda. The impressions she had received there had stirred her deeply, and she described in graphic language the fathomless misery and poverty, the hopeless ignorance of the provincial working classes. The conclusion she drew from it all was that under existing conditions there was no way of helping these people.

"Show me any such way; show me how under present circumstances I can serve the peasants, and I am ready to go back to the villages at once," she said. And her whole manner left no doubt of her absolute sincerity and readiness to keep her word. But her experience had been that of many others who had idealised "the people," and also their own power of stirring them; and we were none of us prepared with any definite counsel that could deter her from the new path she had determined to tread—simply because she could see no other leading to the desired end.

When I went to Odessa in the late autumn of the same year I found Vera Figner there. In conjunction with Kibàltchitch, Frolènko,[1] Kolotkèvitch, and Zlatopòlsky she was busy with preparations for an attempt on the life of Alexander II., who was about to return to Petersburg from Livadia. The dynamite was stored in her house; she had now put aside all doubt, and devoted herself with her whole soul to terrorist activity.[2]

She belonged to the Russian aristocracy; her grandfather had won a name for himself in the guerilla warfare against Napoleon's invasion. Inflexible determination

[1] See chap. xi. p. 98, note.—*Trans.*

[2] Kibàltchitch was executed for participation in the attempt against Alexander II. in March, 1881. The others mentioned here were all condemned to penal servitude for life and imprisoned in Schlüsselburg, where Kolotkèvitch and Zlatopòlsky died. Frolènko is still alive (1902).

and tireless perseverance were her most prominent qualities; she was never contented with a single task, even the most enthralling, but would carry on work in all sorts of different directions simultaneously. While engaged in making ready for this attempt on the Tsar's life she was at the same time organising revolutionary societies among the youth of the country, doing propaganda work in the higher ranks of society, and helping us in Odessa with a secret newspaper that we were starting for South Russia.

But Vera Figner was still only in the developing stage of her strength and capacities. She was already highly esteemed by all who came near her, winning their sympathy and confidence; yet even her greatest friends could hardly suspect the depth of character possessed by this radiantly beautiful girl. It was fully shown in 1882, when nearly all her comrades of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya* were in prison, and the few who had escaped capture had fled into foreign countries; she resolutely declined to entertain the idea of flight, though the danger of arrest menaced her at every turn. In 1883 she fell a victim to the treachery of Degàiev,[1] and was sentenced to death; but "by favour" this was altered to lifelong penal servitude, and she was immured in the living grave of the Schlüsselburg fortress, where she still is (1902).

To return to my comrades in the Moscow prison, Spandoni and Tchuikòv; besides their own narratives of their past experiences I could also avail myself of their formal indictments, which they had with them. The chief characteristic of these documents was their entire failure to show any grounds for the exceptionally heavy sentences inflicted. I will set down here what the Public Prosecutor had to say against these two companions of my captivity.

"Athanasius Spandoni was connected with a secret printing press discovered in Odessa in the house of the married couple Degàiev." Thus began the indictment,

[1] See note, p. 43.

and it went on to state that he had refused to make any confession, but that his membership of the secret society *Naròdnaia Vòlya* was sworn to by Mme. Degàiev, who also stated that he had twice visited her house. That was absolutely all. Two visits to a secret printing office were punished with fifteen years' penal servitude!

The "crime" of Tchuikòv was scarcely more serious. His indictment ran as follows:—

"When Vera Figner was arrested in Kharkov, the authorities in that place advised us that Vladimir Tchuikòv, among others, had been in correspondence with her. His house being searched, there were found (1) implements for setting up type, (2) implements for making false passports, (3) prussic acid and morphia, (4) various seditious writings (some printed, some in manuscript), (5) a list giving the names of different political criminals, (6) lists for the collection of subscriptions to the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*. Tchuikòv has acknowledged that he agrees with the principles of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*." And on these grounds he was condemned to twenty years' penal servitude.

The charge brought against the rest of the accused in this case, the naval and military officers, were of a similar description; and for these "crimes" they were all condemned to death, the sentence being actually carried out as regards two of their number.

For a time we three were the only inmates of the Pugatchev tower, but we were expecting other companions. In about a fortnight after my advent the condemned in the already mentioned Shebalìn case were to arrive from Kiëv—four sentenced to penal servitude and four to exile, among the latter two women. We awaited their coming with the greatest interest, but when the party arrived only two were brought to our tower, the exiles Makàr Vasìliev and Peter Dashkièvitch. Paraskovya Shebalina and a young girl, Barbara Shtchulèpnikòva, also condemned to exile, were of course taken to the

women's quarters; but the four other men had quite unexpectedly been sent off to Schlüsselburg, as the outcome of a conflict with the prison authorities, of which I will give some particulars.

I have already tried to give some idea of what all convicts must suffer when their fetters are first put on and their heads shaved. Until the time of which I write it had been customary (and still is, in the case of anyone belonging to the "privileged classes") to defer the performance of this barbarous ceremony until arrival in Siberia at the town of Tiumen. But it occurred to the officials that the condemned in the Shebalìn case (*i.e.* Shebalìn, Pankràtov, Karanlov, and Borisòvitch) should be fettered and shaved before their transfer to Moscow. This was hotly resented by the victims themselves, and all the other "politicals" in the Kiëv prison joined in their protest. The authorities then employed force to carry out their intention, and thereupon the prisoners "demonstrated" in the usual fashion, that is, by breaking windows, destroying furniture, etc. The occurrence was reported to Petersburg, and thence the order was at once received to send our four comrades to Schlüsselburg. What that meant I have already indicated: burial alive in a state of perpetual martyrdom. Most of the unhappy victims die in a few years, others lose their reason, and many purposely offer violence to the officials in order to win for themselves a speedy execution. It is easy, then, to imagine our feelings on receiving this news about our comrades, especially as there were some among them at whose door no accusation of any consequence could be laid. Karanlov, for instance, had only been sentenced to four years' penal servitude, the court-martial having found it impossible to inflict a heavier punishment. He had thereupon married, as his wife would by law be permitted to follow him to Siberia; and his imprisonment in Schlüsselburg meant utter separation for them, as he would not even be allowed to write to her.

The case of the Shebalins was even more sad. The young wife had scarcely parted from her husband when her child—an unweaned infant, whom she had with her in prison—fell ill and died. She herself succumbed to her grief, and late in the autumn died in the Moscow prison.

Soon after these arrivals there came fresh batches of "politicals," until the great prison was full to overflowing. The Lopàtin case contributed many. Hermann Lopàtin is one of the best-known figures in our Russian revolutionary movement. In 1884 he had returned from abroad (whither he had earlier been obliged to flee), in order to resuscitate the organisation of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*, all the active members of which were in prison in consequence of Degàiev's treachery. Lopàtin had almost to begin at the beginning again in reorganising that terrorist society, and travelled for this purpose all over Russia, establishing fresh connections everywhere. As he could not depend on his memory he had to write down the names of members, with notes as to their capacity for usefulness, and he kept the bit of paper with this list on it always about his person, meaning to destroy it if in any danger. Unfortunately, this proved impossible, for one day he was seized in the street by the secret police and overpowered before he could manage to swallow the compromising document, though he had actually got it into his mouth. All whose names were on his list were, of course, arrested, and imprisonments were made all over Russia. The numerous persons who were sent to the central prison in Moscow in consequence of Lopàtin's capture were for the most part scarcely out of boyhood, and their guilt entirely consisted in their being named in Lopàtin's list.

One case that especially moved me was that of Rubìnok, a young student from Moscow University, aged only nineteen, highly gifted, and developed intellectually far beyond his years. He was condemned to three years' exile in Eastern Siberia, and was eventually sent to one

of the most forsaken corners of the earth—in the province of Yakutsk, beyond the arctic circle. While there he was somehow or other set upon by the half-savage natives and nearly killed, in consequence of which violent treatment he lost his reason and became permanently insane.

There was much said in our prison (and throughout Moscow, too) about the fate of another young student of the Peter Rasoumòvsky Academy. His name was Kovalièv; he had been arrested on some trifling count, and confined in the police prison. A certain officer of the guard, Belino-Bshezòvsky, was also there, under examination for some criminal offence. This representative of our gilded youth entered into league with the gendarmerie to take advantage of the young student's inexperience; and they planned no less than the concoction of a false attempt at assassination. The officer pretended to Kovalièv that he himself belonged to the revolutionists, and tempted the boy with the suggestion of killing the Public Prosecutor of the Moscow Courts (the present Minister of Justice, Mouravièv). The unwary youth fell into the trap, and the *agent provocateur* furnished him with a loaded revolver; then, when Kovalièv was to be examined by the Public Prosecutor, he was suddenly seized on his way to the office by the gendarmes (instructed, of course, by Belino-Bshezòvsky), searched, and the weapon found on him. He was at once charged with being caught in an attempt to murder the Public Prosecutor. In his despair he tried to commit suicide, but was prevented. The provocative rôle played by the gendarmerie was here too flagrant to be concealed, and the representations of the victim's father were successful in rescuing him from their clutches. An order was sent from Petersburg to hush up the affair. Rumours were current everywhere that Mouravièv had been privy to the action of the gendarmerie, his attempted assassination being designed to fix public notice upon him and bring him to the front. But I have no means of knowing how far there was any foundation for this report.

CHAPTER XIV

A NOT INCORRUPTIBLE INSPECTOR — BROKEN FETTERS —RESISTANCE TO THE SHAVING PROCESS—VISITORS IN THE PRISON

IN this Moscow prison we "politicals" had frequent opportunities of intercourse, and we soon managed to get news of the outer world. This was partly through our discovery that one of the inspectors was accessible to bribes. This man—we will call him Smirnòv—was about five-and-twenty, his family an impoverished branch of the smaller rural nobility. His sister was the mistress of a personage of some importance, and he owed his situation as prison inspector to her influence. Reckless, daring, and up to all sorts of dodges, he was ready for any adventure, and would not even have recoiled from committing a crime if it had seemed likely to be profitable to him. Scarcely able to read and write, he had an almost superstitious reverence for anything like education, and that made him anxious to ingratiate himself with us "politicals." He was doubly delighted at being useful to us: first, because it flattered his vanity, and secondly, because we were very willing to reward his services with coin of the realm. He had a special affection for me, and often came to my cell for a gossip about all sorts of things. Of his own accord he suggested that he might help me to escape; but I turned every plan over and over, and could see none likely of success.

"Just listen, though," he said once; "we can work it out like this: I can disguise you as a lamplighter or a stove-

cleaner, and take you out of the prison with me, and then we can go abroad together."

This might indeed have been managed, but there was much to be said against it; above all, the feeling of solidarity with my comrades prevented me from wishing to escape alone. The other two, my neighbours, had severer sentences than mine to undergo, and I could not have borne to leave them behind. We should have needed a considerable sum of money, which I had not at command; and then, besides, I should have had this man on my hands for the rest of our lives. All this led me to decline his offer.

Meanwhile, my companions had a plan of their own for breaking through the wall and so getting free, and although they had kept their preparations carefully secret, Smirnòv got an inkling of them.

"Do you think I don't know your comrades want to get out?" he said to me one day. "Only tell them to manage so that I don't get into trouble. I shan't betray them."

I promised him he should not be let in for anything, and told my comrades; but they very soon saw their plan was not feasible, and gave it up. We had no reason to fear that this man would tell tales of us, he was too much in our hands; but on one occasion I forced him to give information to the authorities, as I will now relate.

It had come to our knowledge that the ordinary criminals in this prison managed to disembarrass themselves of their fetters, not only at night, but through the day, and that this was winked at by the officials. I therefore resolved to follow their example, and get rid of my chains, but openly, not in secret.

"Smirnòv," I said, "bring me a hammer and a nail."

"What do you want them for?"

"You shall see directly."

He did as I told him; I stepped on to the iron landing, and in his presence broke the rivets of my fetters.

"What are you doing?" cried Smirnòv. "I shall have to pay for that!"

"Not a bit. Go at once and tell the governor I have broken my fetters."

"But I can't go and denounce you!"

"Don't be silly," said I; "do as I say."

He went, protesting and shaking his head, and soon after called me to go before the governor. I fastened up my chains with twine in place of the rivets, and followed him.

"What's all this?" cried the old man in great excitement. "You've broken your fetters? You are trying to make your escape?"

And he raised his hands in horror at this shocking discovery.

"On the contrary," replied I. "If I were in your place I should feel reassured about that, if a prisoner broke his chains openly."

"I don't know what you mean," said the governor; "this is a serious business."

"If I were contemplating flight," continued I, "I should not break my fetters in the presence of the inspector, but should carefully keep quiet about it. I merely wanted to get rid of a perfectly unnecessary inconvenience, that worries me day and night."

"That's all very well," observed the governor, "but you can't expect me to give you permission to take them off as you please in this fashion!"

"You needn't give me permission," I returned. "You need only behave as if you know nothing about the matter, and consider everything to be 'in good order,' as you say in your reports."

"That's a nice suggestion!" said the old governor, amused and half relenting. "But what do you suppose my superiors would think of it?"

"Unless you tell them, I don't see that they will ever have cause to think about it," I replied. "It will never

occur to the Governor of Moscow to examine whether my chains are fastened with rivets or with string."

"Then if an inspection is made you will be wearing your fetters?" he asked, laughing.

"Of course! You see, I've come to you in full dress," and I pointed to my tied-up chains.

We parted quite amicably; and I took it that informal permission not to wear our fetters had been conceded. It was not so easy to get dispensation from having our heads shaved; yet that we also achieved. According to rule, half the head should have been shaved every month; and there was no getting out of this save by a downright refusal to submit. This we accordingly made; and the barber reported it to the governor, who sent for us to come to him singly.

"What do you want me to do now?" said the good-humoured old man to me.

"Simply to report to the Governor of Moscow that such and such prisoners refuse to let their heads be shaved, and declare that they will offer determined resistance if forced. We have nothing against you," I continued, "but this is our only way of appealing publicly against barbarous and humiliating usage."

Whether he transmitted our protest I do not know; but anyhow, we were not again asked to undergo this degrading process until the end of our stay in this prison.

Russian prison regulations provide that prisoners belonging to the different categories shall be treated differently: the "administrative exiles" less severely than those banished to Siberia after a regular trial; and the latter again somewhat better than those condemned to penal servitude. But by the end of a month or two we had so contrived that this gradation was no longer apparent. We hard-labour prisoners only differed from the other "politicals" in having to wear the convict dress, and in not being allowed—as they were—to see our ladies,

who were imprisoned in their own special tower. These interviews were only permitted to them when those who wished to meet were related, married, or betrothed to each other. But this was soon arranged. Various couples had an understanding on the subject, and addressed simultaneous petitions to the Governor of Moscow, asking to be allowed interviews with each other, as they were betrothed. In most cases this was a purely fictitious engagement, as the staff very well knew, and was only designed to vary the monotony of prison life; but not seldom the pretence led to a veritable attachment, as may easily be imagined. These were mostly young people of from eighteen to eight-and-twenty, and the nature of their surroundings shed a romantic glamour over their intercourse. The young pair met in the office of the prison, a dreary apartment with grated windows; and every word was listened to by an official. Prison life lent a poetical and spiritualised expression to their features, and there was much to awaken mutual interest and compassion. Sometimes this affection remained purely platonic; but in some cases an actual wedding was the upshot. Of course, in the latter event the young couple received the hearty sympathy of all their comrades, who also had personal reasons for rejoicing. The ceremony always took place in the prison chapel, and was a great occasion which pleasantly varied our dull existence.

Prisoners were allowed at intervals to receive visitors from outside. These also must be near relations, and often other friends and acquaintances gave themselves out as betrothed to such and such a prisoner in order to be allowed entry. It occasionally happened in this way that an awkward situation came about, if a young man or a girl appeared to be betrothed to two or more different people; but the solution was generally a satisfactory one in the end.

These visits were received in the office to which we had first been introduced, but the room on these occasions

took on a very different appearance. The old captain sat in his place busy with his ledgers. By the door stood the inspector in full uniform, with revolver and cartridge-bag at his waist and his long sabre at his side; and round the walls would be grouped the prisoners with their visitors. The dim light falling through the grated windows shone on many a characteristic scene. All classes and ages were represented—young and old, men, women, and even children. Here would be a doctor or lawyer accompanied by his wife talking to their brother, a banished student. There an old peasant-woman, who had made the long journey by the Volga from some distant province to bid good-bye to her favourite son, would tell him the village news or bitterly lament her difficulty in living now he had been taken from her. Close by, the scions of a noble race —Prince Volhònsky and his princess—would be chatting with Malyòvany, his uncle; or Senator Shtshulèpnikov would sermonise his young daughter for having allowed herself to be drawn into the revolutionary movement, whereby she had now to suffer the penalty of exile to Siberia. All around would be the babble of voices—condolences, arguments, gossip, even jokes. One woman would furtively wipe away a tear as she bowed a grief-stricken head; while another would break into uncontrollable sobbing, because the sight of some beloved face now pale and haggard from long confinement and anxiety had robbed her of self-command. As everywhere else throughout the world, laughter and weeping, hope and despair, went side by side; only here in prison emotion is more openly avowed, ceremony more easily dispensed with, and franker expression given to the feelings. Those who here sought out their friends or relatives speedily got acquainted with one another and with all the prisoners whom they were accustomed to see. Among the "politicals," as Socialists, there are no distinctions of rank or privilege; and the prison atmosphere soon exercised its levelling influence on all, and bound together members of every class with

the common tie of sorrow and sympathy. Once only was the rule broken, and the announcement of a visitor's name and position fixed all eyes upon him.

A grey-headed man in the garb of the Russian lower middle-class—a long kaftan and broad girdle—had entered the room.

"Whom do you want?" asked the captain, looking up from his books.

"I should like to speak to a person whom you have here in the prison. Làzarev is his name," replied the stranger.

"Have you a permit?"

"Certainly, certainly; here it is," said the man in the kaftan, and held out the paper.

The captain settled his glasses and read. Suddenly up he jumped as if he had had a blow, and began to stammer out a thousand apologies. "Pray sit down, Count! I really did not recognise you!" And then to the inspector, "Hi, Ivànov!" he cried, "tell them to send Làzarev. The Count wants to see him."

The whole prison seemed waked up. Bells were rung, and people ran about calling out: "Làzarev! Send Làzarev! Count Leo Tolstoi has come to see him!"

Yegor Làzarev, a peasant by birth, a very intelligent and well-educated man, was from Count Tolstoi's district. He was to be sent to Eastern Siberia by administrative order for a term of three years, simply because he, being a lawyer, had defended his poorer neighbours of the village in various cases of exaction by officials.

CHAPTER XV

POLITICAL CONDITION OF RUSSIA AND THE REVOLUTIONARY PARTY—OUR LITTLE SOCIETY—FÊTE DAYS—PROHIBITED VISITS—A LECTURE ON MANNERS

AT the time of which I am writing the reactionary policy of the new Tsar was already clearly indicated. Four years had passed since the accession of Alexander III., and signs of his domestic policy were visible in frequent death-sentences, favouring of Anti-Semitism (which had sprung up in various towns in south-west Russia), the appointment of the universally detested Count Dmitri Tolstoi as Minister of the Interior, the institution of new regulations at the Universities, not only for students, but for professors, and so on. In spite of all this there were still some incurable optimists who hoped this might prove but a brief transition period, soon to be followed by radical reforms; they even anticipated the granting of a Constitution to the country. I remember well how various educated people—lawyers, physicians, etc.—would, when conversing with us, make hopeful prophecies: "You'll see, in five years we shall have the Constitution."

Undoubtedly many of the younger revolutionists shared these hopes; if not all, at any rate the majority believed that sooner or later the Terrorists would "remove" Alexander III., as they had his father, and that then, as a matter of course, "the Constitution *must* come." Some were so firmly convinced of this that when I ventured to express a doubt, bets were often offered me as to how few years would elapse before the great event

came to pass. "Before we have reached our place of exile Alexander III. will be gone," declared many young people.

This self-deception had one advantage in helping them to bear their fate and keep up their courage; but these castles in the air were doomed to a speedy destruction. As I have said already, the *Naròdnaia Vòlya* was nearing its collapse, and the Terrorists were now scarcely any real menace to the Government. The original trusted leaders of the society were either dead or languishing in prison, and their successors showed none of the capacity needed to carry on a conspiracy of that sort; while, on the other hand, the police had learnt much, knew better how to spread their nets, and left the young conspirators no time to develop their powers. The untried and unskilfully managed societies were run to earth before they could undertake anything definite, and the unity and interdependence that characterised the original band of members disappeared.

In 1884 various fractions of the society came to life again. There was the *Young Naròdnaia Vòlya*, whose members carried on a sort of minor terrorism; that is to say, they directed their daggers and bombs against the lesser officials, governors of gaols, agrarian and industrial employers, etc., holding that there should be an immediate forcible answer made to every act of tyranny by constituted authorities against the workers. There were the "Bombists," who swore by dynamite as the sole and only remedy; the "Militarists," who thought a conspiracy within the army the best hope. Finally a group entirely new to Russia made its appearance—the Social Democrats, among whom I was numbered.

In our prison at Moscow all these different views had their adherents, and naturally the liveliest discussions took place, though their course was always fairly peaceful. Notwithstanding all our differences of opinion, we formed together a sort of big family, in which there was absolutely

no distinction of high or low, rich or poor. All were equal, all shared alike.

The prison food was beneath criticism; even the most robust at their hungriest could scarcely swallow a spoonful of the repulsive malodorous broth in wooden bowls brought to our cells at midday. This is explained by the fact that the sum originally provided by Government for our maintenance was extremely small; and on its way through to us a great part of it found its way into the bottomless pockets of officials great and small, among whom there is an organised system of general peculation. The big cauldrons used for cooking the food of several thousand prisoners were filled up with the worst materials that were procurable; and we "politicals," after a very few specimens of it, decided to feed at our own expense. So we founded a commissariat union, and elected as chief, to whose care our domestic economy should be entrusted, Làzarev, the peasant-lawyer, whom Tolstoi had visited. All the money that we had at command—either what had been given in keeping to the prison authorities on our arrival or what was sent us by friends and relations—was handed over to our chief of commissariat, and he had to arrange our dietary so that all should share alike. In the morning we had tea, milk, and bread *ad libitum*. For dinner at midday we had a meal—generally of two courses—prepared from the provisions in our larder by one of the ordinary criminals hired by us as cook. In the evening there was tea and bread again. Nobody could say that our table was exactly luxurious; but then our means were extremely limited. Our poor housekeeper had often to rack his brains over the problem of making both ends meet; and he at last hit on the expedient of buying horse-flesh for us. Beef was cheap enough—ten kopecks (about 2½*d.*) a pound, if I remember rightly; but horse-flesh came to only about half that price, and we agreed to try it. It proved quite eatable, if somewhat tough and

tasteless; but two or three among us were dainty, and declared that the meat gave them indigestion, and they could not stand it. As the rest of us believed this to be pure imagination, and simply the result of prejudice, our "chief" determined to use a little art. He suggested that he might buy beef for these "invalids"; but he really just had some of the horse-flesh cooked up a little differently from the rest, and set it before them. The result was excellent; our epicures much relished their "beefsteak," and declared it made them feel sick to see us eating horse; while we had some trouble in keeping our faces straight! This lasted the whole time of our stay in Moscow, and not one of our gourmands ever once complained of indigestion again! When afterwards we let out that for months they had eaten and enjoyed horse-flesh, of course they were furious, and asserted—to the common amusement of the others—that they had always thought the meat had a queer taste.

Besides our own friends there were many people personally unknown to us who cared for our material needs, I mean the members of the "Red Cross of the Revolution," of which mention has been made in an earlier chapter as the "old clothes society." These were chiefly women, who undertook with much zeal the small but very charitable and indispensable task of providing for the political prisoners and exiles. Many a one, left deserted in the world, had reason to value the unselfish activity of these good Samaritans. Often enough have I seen the grateful emotion of some lonely soul, when the strange hand of a kind woman—one of the society's members—bestowed on him cheerfully some useful and hardly spared article. Our little company in the prison of Moscow seems to have come off particularly well in this way. Long before the commencement of the journey to Siberia our benefactresses warned us to let them have a list of what we should be needing for our travels. When it is

remembered that we were over fifty persons, and that before many of us lay a journey of more than half a year, it is evident how much opportunity there was for the thoughtful and minute care of these noble women. There were hundreds of little things wanted that gave them not only time and trouble, but personal inconvenience to procure; and their self-sacrificing exertions to lighten the lot of the captives were infinitely touching.

Easter and Christmas are special feast days in Russia. The Russian revolutionists have definitely renounced all religious creeds, and there are many among them who in any case would have nothing to do with the Orthodox Russian Church—Jews, Germans, Poles, etc. Nevertheless, those in prison or in places of banishment always take part whenever possible in the common festivals of the people; and these days of rejoicing are doubly welcomed when they come to break the dreary routine of prison-life. Relations, friends, and the Red Cross ladies send food and even dainties to the prisons, and the inmates hold high revel. In the Moscow prison we had a specially merry time on Easter Eve. We had petitioned the Governor of Moscow for leave to pass the night before Easter together, according to Russian custom. This was conceded; and we all, including the women, assembled in the quarters of the "administratives," where the rooms are large, because the prisoners are there grouped together, not confined in single cells. All manner of good things had been sent us—Easter cakes, eggs, hams, poultry, and all that is customary, including some bottles of light wine and beer—so that our Easter table was a magnificent sight.[1] Under the superintendence of the old governor and his staff we spent the evening and half the night in a merry fashion not often witnessed in a prison. Songs

[1] In Russia it is the custom at Easter in every house to spread a large table with cold dishes of all descriptions, and the master of the house invites every visitor to partake of the feast, which they are bound to do, eating and drinking standing. This "Easter table" is kept going throughout the festival time.—*Trans.*

were sung, there were jokes and laughter; finally a harmonica appeared, and the young people began to dance. Yet, despite so much hearty and unfeigned cheerfulness, not one of us could forget our real condition; indeed, the very sight of gaiety brought to the minds of many of us remembrance of home, where our dear ones were at this moment celebrating the feast-day, though with many sad thoughts of the absent.

For us hard-labour men this was the first chance we had had of getting to know our women fellow-prisoners. The "administratives" met them not only in visiting hours, but in the courtyard, although the latter was supposed to be against rules. Those condemned to hard labour, on the contrary, were not admitted to the visitors' room. After this Easter festival, however, even we "deprived of all rights" managed to break through the regulations. Under the pretext that we had some business in the office we had ourselves conducted across the big yard, and the warder left us at the door, supposing we should go straight on down the corridor. Instead of that we raced across the courtyard to the door of the women's quarters. The flustered warder came tearing after us, calling us back; but we had reached our goal, our ladies were at their door, and we could exchange a few friendly words with them. Of course, this was only a defiant frolic; we took pleasure in trampling on the hated prison rules, and the authorities saw nothing very wicked in it. The prohibition of meeting had no sense in it whatever, as in a few weeks' time all the "politicals" were to travel in company together to Siberia. In this, as in many other cases, we were unnecessarily thwarted, simply because in paragraph so-and-so of the regulations this or that is forbidden.

These regulations are not nearly so strictly kept as regards the ordinary criminals, who are often allowed to wander all about a Russian prison without supervision, and manage to get admitted even to the women's quarters. Moreover, it not infrequently happens that a criminal who

has money at his disposal is allowed by the warders and overseers to be out all night in the town, where he amuses himself or goes about his own business. So far as the treatment of prisoners goes, we "politicals" are only too glad to be put on the footing of "common criminals"; which but seldom happens to us, however. Yet in one respect the "politicals" have an advantage—I mean in the demeanour of the prison staff towards them. Every official, high or low, knows well that he cannot go beyond a certain point with them, and that he must behave with courtesy. This unwritten law arose from the fact that for generations the "politicals" belonged exclusively to the educated and privileged classes, and also from their proud conviction that they have only acted according to the dictates of reason and conscience, which upholds them in the firm feeling of innocence, and makes them fiercely jealous for the preservation of both their own self-respect and their dignity in the eyes of others. If any official ventures to ignore this sentiment he may count on energetic protest, and in such cases the prison is often the scene of a bitter conflict that may lead to tragic results. As a slight example I may relate the following incident.

A certain great personage had come from Petersburg—Galkin Vrassky, the head of the controlling department for all Russian prisons. His position demanded the deepest awe and subservience from all minor officials, and he himself was fully conscious of his power and bore himself accordingly. He was a Privy Counsellor and extremely pompous. Before his promised visit to our prison we had heard that it was this gentleman's custom not to uncover his head when entering the cells, but to keep his hat on all the time. We instantly agreed together that if he behaved so here, the first of us whose cell he visited should teach him a lesson in manners.

Galkin Vrassky came, attended by an imposing suite, and accompanied by—among others—Prince Galitzin, the Vice-Governor of Moscow. He began his rounds with

our Pugatchev Tower, and went first to the cell of Peter Dashkièvitch. Dashkièvitch had been a theological student; he was a man of very calm but unyielding temperament, and permeated to an uncommon degree with the instinct of justice and fairness. It was now incumbent on him to beard this haughty official, who had scarcely begun the stereotyped question—"Have you any complaints to make?"—when Dashkièvitch interrupted him, saying quietly: "It is very impolite of you, sir, to enter my apartment without removing your hat."

Galkin Vrassky reddened to the roots of his hair, turned on his heel and left the cell, the whole company following him in silence.

"In what case was he condemned?" we heard him ask, as he stood on the landing.

"In the Kiëv trial," someone answered.

"Aha, one of those fellows who made trouble in the prison over there!" he said in a satisfied tone.

He visited the rest of us, holding his hat in his hand most politely, but he did not forget to revenge himself on Dashkièvitch after his own fashion.

Dashkièvitch's sentence had been "banishment to the less distant provinces of Siberia," a fairly mild punishment; but Vrassky now ordered his transportation to the furthest wilds of the country, and he was sent to Tunka, on the borders of Mongolia.

CHAPTER XVI

PREPARATIONS FOR OUR TRAVELS—THE BOAT JOURNEY BY THE VOLGA AND THE KAMA—EKATERINBURG —ON THE TROIKA—"TO EUROPE, TO ASIA"

THE spring of 1885 came, and we began to make ready for our long journey. At the outset arose the very important question, what luggage could we take? The rules prescribed that those "deprived of all rights" should not have more than 25 lbs. in weight. The equipment provided by Government weighed that by itself; so that all our own belongings would have to be abandoned, including books, of course. This would have been a severe loss, for in Moscow our private library had grown considerably. Count Tolstoi had given us an edition of his collected works in twelve volumes, and also a *History of Russia* in twenty-nine volumes. Happily, however, the authorities decided that only the gross weight of the luggage should be counted for the whole detachment of exiles; so that as the "administratives" were allowed 5 pood (about 180 lbs.) apiece, and many of them had but few possessions, we managed to get our books in.

As everything we possessed had been through the hands of the officials, of course there was no forbidden literature in our library; nevertheless we were told to submit it all anew to inspection, and in the course of this the appointed censor had opportunities for exhibiting to our delighted gaze his special qualifications for the post. He was a high official, and had graduated in jurisprudence at

Petersburg. Our friend Rubìnok turned to him with the question whether he might take Karl Marx's *Capital* with him.

"Why, how can you take somebody else's capital with you?" asked our censor in a surprised tone.

"It is my own," said Rubìnok, not comprehending.

"Well, if it is your own, of course you can take it," was the reply, "only you must hand it over to the officer commanding the convoy, who takes charge of all money."

We, who saw the joke, had great difficulty in repressing our mirth at the idea of Rubìnok's running off with the apparently unknown Karl Marx's property!

When the time of departure drew nigh the idea was mooted of giving some substantial testimonial to the worthy old Captain Maltchèvsky, our governor. He learned with pleasure of the project, but begged us not to spend on him any of the little money we possessed, as we should need it on our long journey. I forget whether in the end any present was actually bought or not. At all events, the old gentleman was a great exception among his kind. I have only known one other instance of "politicals" desiring to testify their gratitude to a prison governor in such a manner. Yet an event happened at the last moment which changed our hitherto friendly feeling for Captain Maltchèvsky into resentment and dislike.

During the whole eight months of our sojourn in Moscow we had been on a perfectly amicable footing with the prison staff. Our independent proceeding in discarding our fetters and our revolt against head-shaving had been silently condoned at the time; but it was just these two points that led to a rupture of relations on the day of our departure. We were informed that we must now submit to the head-shaving and chain-riveting processes, because the officer who was to command our convoy insisted on it. We roundly refused to comply; and the "administratives,"

who were themselves exempt from the proceeding, declared their intention of supporting us in our resolve.

The hour for mustering the party arrived. We determined to keep together, and on no account to go singly into the office for our enrolment. The staff saw at once that any attempt to use force would lead to a row; so they resolved to outwit us. We were given to understand that the idea of subjecting us to the barbarous proceeding had been thought better of, and we were committed to the charge of the convoy officer. The party was almost ready to start, when we three "hard-labour men" were suddenly told that if we liked we could get a medical certificate from the doctor to excuse us from travelling on foot when we reached Siberia, as those condemned to penal servitude were supposed to do. We said we were quite willing to be examined for this purpose; but scarcely were we separated from our companions than a party of warders hidden behind the door surrounded us. We saw immediately that we had fallen into a trap, and determined to resist to our utmost. We kept close together, and struck out with feet and fists when the warders advanced on us; but, of course, we were ultimately overpowered by their superior numbers. We were dragged away and each held forcibly down on a bench while the barber shaved the half of our heads and the blacksmith riveted on our fetters. Captain Maltchèvsky stood by the while and gave the orders. This performance of his was enough to alter our sentiments towards him, and our parting was distinctly cool.

Our journey began on a beautiful morning in the middle of May when spring had just made its appearance in Moscow. The sunshine was bright and warm, and the scent of spring was in the air. Our mood was by no means in consonance with this aspect of outward things; but most of us elected to go on foot to the station. Our procession must have been an odd sight. Convicts with fettered feet and grey prison garb marched along

beside other men and women in ordinary clothes. Most of us were quite young; few had reached middle-age. Of the twelve women in our party three were voluntarily accompanying their husbands to Siberia.

The last violent scene had depressed us all, and we traversed in silence the quieter streets of Moscow, where the few passers-by paused to look at us, and here and there faces stared from the windows. The station, which we reached after a short tramp, had been cleared of people; only some gendarmes, prison officials, and porters were on the platform. Police were keeping guard all round, and nobody who had not a special order was allowed through to the train reserved for us. When we "politicals" were established in the places assigned to us, a few persons—relations of the prisoners—arrived to say good-bye. The gendarmes would not let them come near to the carriages, and we had to shout our farewell greetings.

"Good-bye! Good luck! Don't forget us!" sounded from the barred windows.

"Keep up your courage! We'll meet again soon!" came back the response.

"Let us sing something together," called out somebody. We had formed a choral society in prison, and now started a song of Little Russia—"The Ferryman." Slowly the train was set in motion, and as we glided away the affecting strains of the beautiful melody accompanied us. Many could not restrain their tears, and sobs were heard which the rattle of the train soon drowned. With faces pressed against the bars of the windows we gazed back at Moscow as long as it could be seen. Then came the outskirts, and then our eyes were refreshed by the sight of broad meadows.

When we halted at the next station there were a good many people on the platform—peasants and workmen. Many of them came up to the carriage windows unhindered, and seemed to be offering things to us.

"Here, take it, in the Virgin's name!" said a voice close

by me. I looked out, and was aware of an old peasant woman who held out a kopeck[1] to me.

"I don't need it, mother; give it to someone who does," I said; and felt my heart warm towards this kindly old woman of the people.

"Take it, take it, my dear!" she insisted.

"Well, as a remembrance, then." I agreed; and I kept the little copper coin for a long time before I eventually lost it.

A whole chain of recollections was started in my mind by this occurrence, and I sank deep in thought. The further we went from Moscow, the sadder became my spirits; I felt as if I were leaving behind me there a host of friends I should never see again. I did not want to talk to anyone, but gazed silently out of the window. The line ran through a factory district; the stations were crowded, and along the railway banks we saw many groups of workpeople. Men and women in brightly coloured cotton garments stopped and called out after the train, making expressive gestures. Whether they knew us for exiles on our way to Siberia and meant to send us a message of sympathy I cannot tell. Perhaps it is the custom in that countryside, whence many prisoners are transported, to express in this way that feeling of compassion towards the "children of misfortune"[2] so common among the Russian people.

On the following morning we arrived at Nijni Novgorod, whence we were to journey by boat to Perm, by the Volga and its tributary the Kama. Our party attracted much attention both at the station and on the way to the quay. The married and betrothed couples walked in front, arm in arm, and the rest of us followed, the escort surrounding us all. Two large cabins, one for the men and one for the women, were assigned to us on the big barge, which was

[1] Value one farthing.—*Trans.*

[2] By this name the common people throughout Russia and Siberia designate all prisoners.

taken in tow by a river steamer. Here we were rather comfortably lodged, and we were all in common allowed free access to the roomy deck, which was enclosed by iron netting at the sides and overhead. Food we provided for ourselves, and on that head had nothing to complain of, thanks to the kindness of our friends and to the provident care of Làzarev, our elected chief or *stàrostà*.

The voyage lasted some days; the weather was uninterruptedly fine; and we sat on deck from early morning till late evening, revelling in the charming scenes which passed before our eyes, on this giant among European rivers and on its tributary stream. Especially lovely was it towards sunset, when our choir, which boasted some exceptionally fine voices, would sing our favourite songs. As one sat, with head supported against the iron netting, and eyes following the shining ripples lit by exquisite fairy-like tints, the impression made on one by those beautiful sad songs was never to be forgotten. Gradually the colour would fade from the sky, and the stars shine down from a cloudless heaven, to be mirrored in the glassy surface of the great river; and everything around me—the river, the stars, the songs—would recall to my mind another royal stream, the mighty Dnieper, by whose banks my childhood had been spent.

"What are you thinking of? Why are you so sad?" on one such evening a young "administrative" asked me. She was a girl of about twenty, with whom I had become acquainted during the journey. We were soon engaged in intimate and friendly talk. She could understand my mood, and sympathised heartily. She was an unusually interesting creature of peculiar and, some might say, eccentric character, but of keen intelligence. She told me how she had come to adopt the principles of Socialism, and what kind of life she had quitted to join the revolutionary movement. Like so many others at that time, she had been possessed by the longing to do something for the people — the

peasants. Where and how to begin she did not know, and she could find no one to advise her. She tried to discover some way for herself, and read everything she could get hold of that bore on the subject. At last, against her parents' wishes, she left her home in South Russia for Petersburg, where she hoped to find someone who could help her. In the course of her quest, and before she had arrived at any definite solution of the problems that perplexed her, she was arrested, and was now being sent to Siberia for three years' banishment. Like hundreds of others, this noble-hearted girl had expended her strength and sacrificed her happiness to no purpose, without benefit to others, without attaining her own peace of mind; a victim to the cramping and illiberal political conditions that reign in our native land. She died by her own hand in Siberia some time after this.

From Perm we were taken by rail to Ekaterinburg, where we arrived after a wearisome day's journey. Here we spent the night; and next day our party, consisting entirely of "politicals" with their escort, was to drive to Tiumen, the first town within the borders of Siberia. The construction of the Siberian railway was only just being begun, and the journey — now very simple — was then attended by all manner of difficulties.

At the outset we had a disagreement with the authorities that might have had serious consequences. A number of *troïkas*[1] had been provided for the transportation of ourselves, our escort, and the luggage; in each of them four prisoners and two soldiers were to go, which, with the driver, made seven persons. The younger members of our party thought this too many, and appealed to the officer, Captain Volkov, who had accompanied us from Moscow (and with whom I had previously travelled from Kiëv), to arrange that only three of us and two soldiers should go in

[1] Carriages with three horses harnessed abreast in a peculiar manner, the two outside facing somewhat outwards. The middle horse is trained to trot very fast, and the two outside ones to canter. — *Trans.*

each carriage, or, if he preferred, four of us and only one soldier. As there were not enough carriages for this arrangement the captain refused the request; and our young Hotspurs flatly swore that they would not get in. In other words, they would oblige the soldiers to use force with them, and that would naturally lead to a battle, the results of which might be very unpleasant. The *ispravnik*[1] appeared, and declared that he could not hire any more carriages, as this number had been specially ordered by his chief. There was much arguing up and down, during which several of the young men and two of the women got very angry. We elders, on the contrary, thought the matter not sufficiently important to warrant a conflict which might well result in the despatch of the "administratives" to distant stations for increased periods of exile, and of ourselves perhaps to Schlüsselburg.

"I beg you to get into the carriages," urged Volkov; and the *ispravnik* joined in his persuasions.

"No, we will not. Use force if you like!" cried voices from our midst.

"We shall have to report you as refusing to obey orders."

"Do as you please!" was the answer.

It is absolutely against the rules of our societies not to stand by each other in all dealings with the authorities, whatever the occasion. Despite the fact that the majority among us saw no ground for persisting in this revolt, we were at the mercy of the hot-headed youngsters, and the situation was becoming strained. A struggle seemed inevitable; but some of us had the happy idea of trying the practical experiment of fitting ourselves into one of the vehicles, to see whether the official arrangement were feasible or not. The trial was made, and it turned out that with a little goodwill it was quite possible to find room for seven persons in each *troïka*. In face of this simple fact, the malcontents could hardly maintain their

[1] Head of the district police.—*Trans.*

attitude; so with a little further grumbling and delay they gave in. We had not gone far before each carriage was lightened of one passenger; the soldiers preferred to ride on the baggage-waggons, and only one was left to guard each four prisoners; so we were more comfortable, and everything was peaceably settled.

During the voyage on the Volga and Kama we had fallen into various groups of friends, who now naturally wished to keep together during the land journey. The idea suggested itself of giving our ladies the right to choose their cavaliers, and this plan found favour with the majority; but there were one or two who objected to any sort of "woman's privileges," and even some others who disliked travelling in female society, and declared themselves *hors de concours*. These latter incorrigible mysogynists were, as may be supposed, the youngest among us.

This travelling by *troïka* has, as is well known, a special charm of its own. It can scarcely be called driving; one flies and rushes along at a most exhilarating pace. On that side of the Ural Mountains spring was only just beginning; everything was budding and sprouting, and the air was full of song and other happy sounds of young life.

We flew along great stretches of the highway, raising enormous clouds of whirling dust. Our drivers cheered on their horses with cries and whistling, continually urging them to yet greater speed. At first we sat by fours in the carriages, generally two men and two women; but soon we changed places at every halt, and then five or six people might be seen in one carriage, while only two would be left in another. Here there would be chatter, joking, and songs; there, earnest quiet talk not to be overheard by the guards—words of far-reaching import being perhaps spoken in those whispered conferences. The intimate life in prison had brought many into close relations that had been strengthened during the long journey by rail and boat; and the drive together now

SIBERIAN HALTING-STATION (ÉTAPE)

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gave fresh opportunities for bringing the fellow-sufferers nearer to one another.

Every day we left two stages behind us, each from fifty to sixty versts (about thirty-three to forty English miles), on which the horses were often only changed once, the change being made with lightning rapidity, as the fresh steeds were generally waiting ready harnessed for our hurrying procession. While the drivers were occupied over this business we usually made a hasty meal, buying provisions from the market-women waiting in the yard of the posting-station—hard-boiled eggs, milk, bread, etc. The halting-station (*étape*) for the night we generally reached early, long before twilight set in. Here the first thing was to prepare our meal—dinner and supper in one; that was the task of the *stàrosta* and some volunteer assistants. Afterwards we stayed out in the open air as long as possible. Songs were sung in chorus; groups and couples wandered about in confidential talk; or sometimes we held formal debates, of a very animated description.

On one of the earliest days of our journey we made our first halt in the open, far from any posting-station. We all got out and stood before a boundary post; it was that one so often described, of such sad renown, which bears in engraved letters the two words, "Europe," "Asia."

It was now the beginning of June. A year and three months had gone by since my arrest in Freiburg, and I had now crossed the border between two continents. The sight of this landmark, passed by thousands driven into exile, brought thronging many gloomy thoughts. I had passed fifteen months in German and Russian gaols. "How many years have I now to linger in a Siberian prison?" I asked myself. "Shall I ever see this sign-post again on a return journey? or shall I find my grave over yonder in Siberia?"

CHAPTER XVII

IN TIUMEN—PARTING—ON THE SIBERIAN RIVERS—A STARTLING PROPOSAL

THE town of Tiumen was at that time noted for the disputes that were continually arising between the political exiles and the authorities. We dreaded lest our party might be obliged to sustain a battle of this sort, the causes of which were known to us of old from the letters of various comrades; so we had intended to arrange together betimes how we should behave under given circumstances, what we must insist on, and in what manner we should conduct our dealings with the powers above us. But it was so difficult to get any orderly discussion during the journey, that after all we reached Tiumen without having made any definite plan of action.

Tiumen was then the place whence exiles took their several ways according to their ultimate destination. Our party was to separate here, some going south-west, others north-east. Among the latter were the hard-labour prisoners, the judicially banished exiles, and some of the "administratives." Except us convicts none knew to what town or village they were bound; they did not even know whether they were to go north or south from Tiumen. Now, the difference in climate which this might mean, even if between places in the same province of Siberia could be greater than between Norway and Italy. The anxiety of the "administratives" in awaiting a decision can be imagined, as so much depended for them on the direction in which they were to be taken.

At the very gates of the prison we were within an ace of a squabble with the officials; they wanted to take our ladies to a female prison far away from ours. We opposed this, because such a separation would have upset all our feeding arrangements, besides being otherwise very unwelcome to us all, and the officials finally yielded to our representations.

We were only to remain for a few days in Tiumen, so our chief subject for anxiety was soon settled; most of the "administratives" were bound for the Steppes Government, and would be sent to the southern part of the province of Tobolsk—a relatively pleasant neighbourhood. But we were informed at the same time that they would travel by way of the *etàppuy*, or convoy-stations, which would be by no means pleasant. To be taken by that route, *i.e.* by land, means a journey of some weeks under most uncomfortable conditions, and with all manner of hardships that can perfectly well be avoided by the adoption of the route by water, on either barge or steamboat. The choice of this wearisome route has been a frequent source of trouble with the parties of "politicals." The officials, therefore, were quite accustomed to protests on the subject; but either on grounds of convenience, or for some other reason not vouchsafed to us, they stuck to their proposed arrangement. Our friends who were to go southward resolved to keep up all possible opposition, and we all agreed to support what we considered their perfectly reasonable attitude. We held heated consultations, and ultimately it was decided to send a telegram to the governor of the province, petitioning him that the journey of the "administratives" should be made by boat.

The appointed day of departure arrived, and the "administratives" were sent for to go singly into the office, but we others would not allow them to leave the prison. If the staff had resorted to force there would undoubtedly have been a serious struggle, but all passed off quietly, as they gave in for the time being; only, however, to lay

a trap for us later. Instead of answering our telegram by another, the governor appeared in person (of course, he may merely have come over by chance from Tobolsk) and examined into the affair. He then declared himself quite willing that our comrades should travel by boat, according to our request; and this promise, given by the highest available authority, was sufficient for us, our minds were forthwith at rest. But unfortunately, as will appear hereafter, the highest authority had simply lied to us.

Soon after this the parting came; those of us going northward from Tobolsk and those bound for Eastern Siberia received orders to make ready for the start. There was a good deal to do, as a journey of some months was in question; also our common housekeeping had to be wound up, the money and provisions divided among the different parties according to their respective needs and the distance they had to travel. Besides this, small sums were set apart for any "administratives" or other exiles who were unprovided with means, for use in emergency on their first arrival at their destinations.

The parting was no light matter to us. During the next few days small groups and isolated couples would be seen wandering up and down the prison yard, deep in endless and engrossing talk. Most of us had first become acquainted in the Moscow prison or during the journey; but apart from the more intimate friendships that had been formed among us, we had all been drawn very near to each other in the course of our half-year's sojourn under the same roof. Of course, in view of the separation many resolutions were made of keeping up friendships, and of never forgetting one another, whatever happened. Sad, sad, that external circumstances should too often prove stronger than the firmest resolutions, and even than the heart's desire! After two or three years, with thousands of miles between, and every possible hindrance put in the way of correspondence, friends are gradually lost sight of, and the thought of them even passes from the mind.

With how many of those comrades did I share the hope of one day meeting again! Eighteen years have passed since then, and I have only seen one of them again.

As to the subsequent lot of our "administratives," we learned later that, the party being a large one, the officials had declared themselves unable to carry out the arrangement expressly promised by the governor; and as our comrades refused to go voluntarily by the land route, they were dragged forcibly by soldiers from the prison and packed into the carriages. Much rough usage ensued, but without any really serious result. We had been quieted by lies, because so long as we were all together the authorities had not dared to try conclusions with us by force.

The detachment to which I belonged, which was to travel north-eastwards, consisted of five-and-twenty persons: four condemned to penal servitude — Tchuikòv, Spandoni, Maria Kalyùshnaya, and myself; four judicially exiled—Vasìliev, Dashkièvitch, and two ladies (Tchemodànova and Shtchulèpnikòva); the rest all banished by administrative order — some to the north of Tobolsk Government, some to Eastern Siberia—among these latter being Malyòvany, Rublnok, and our chief of commissariat, Làzarev, who still fulfilled his old functions, our "housekeeping" arrangements continuing as before.

From Tiumen we had to go by boat to Tomsk, our route being as follows: down the Tura, on whose banks Tiumen is situated, to its junction with the Tobol; by the latter as far as the Irtisch, by which to the Obi; and then up stream to the Tomi, on which Tomsk stands. This made a voyage of about 3,000 versts (about 2,000 miles), lasting at least fifteen days. As on the Volga, we were installed in the two cabins of a prisoners' barge, and a steamboat took our floating gaol in tow. This journey afforded little of interest. Although we were in mid-June there were as yet no signs of spring. Sometimes we passed masses of drifting ice; the nights were extremely cold,

and the sunshine gave no great heat by day. The rivers were in flood, and everything looked dead and deserted; for miles round we could often discover no trace of human existence. The deathly stillness, the absence of any sign of growth at this awakening season of the year, the piercing cold, ever increasing as we got further north—all this had an uncanny and depressing effect. "Men and women live in these primeval forests and swamps (*tundra*)," I thought, with a shiver, and I pictured to myself how, after many years of prison had robbed me of strength and vitality, I should be given the "right" of residing in a similar, or perhaps a drearier locality; even then not enjoying the liberty possessed by the unfortunate natives—Samoyedes and Ostiaks—who wander about these eternal woods and steppes.

Our boat occasionally came to anchor, either to get wood for fuel, or at the two or three halting-stations provided. The Ostiaks would then come on board, paddling up in their wretched boats (*yaliks*) made of bark, and would offer fish for barter. They hardly seemed to understand the use of money, for when asked the price of a fish, they would only answer with the one word "roup," meaning "rouble," and would then gratefully accept a copper coin, though a piece of bread or a little tobacco would elicit much more joy. These people had a most pitiable appearance, and were treated with the utmost contempt by our boatmen and the soldiers, who usually addressed them all as "Vanka" (Johnny), which they accepted quite calmly. Sometimes we saw their huts in the distance, cone-shaped structures, the framework made of branches, the walls of birch-bark or reindeer skins.

Except the capital town of Tobolsk, situated at the junction of the Tobol with the great Irtisch, throughout the length of some thousand versts we only passed two inhabited places dignified with the name of towns—Surgut and Narim. Here, and at Berèsov, on the northern coast of the continent, some of our "administratives" were to

take up their abode. We parted from them at Tobolsk. The conditions of life in some of these places of exile may be guessed at from our glimpses of them. A "town" of this sort consists of some dozen wooden huts, the inhabitants of which are usually a mixed race, Russian and native. These people make out a livelihood with difficulty, subsisting almost exclusively on fish. An educated man must find existence in such a place unspeakably miserable; yet the Russian Government sends even minors here. I know a young girl who at the age of seventeen was exiled to Berèsov, and had to languish there for twelve years. Fortunately, none of the women in our company were destined for these waste places of the earth.

When we began to go up the Obi there was scarcely any change of scene, but ever the same hopeless wastes. Our little company had much diminished; our choir was disbanded; and life on the barge was quiet and monotonous as we slowly glided on to Tomsk.

This town, which counts as one of the liveliest in Siberia, only harboured at this time a very small number of political exiles. When we arrived, two of them came at once on to our barge, burning with curiosity to see who we were, and to have news from home; and they unexpectedly found acquaintances among our party. One young lady I had known six years before; she stared at me now, and would scarcely believe that the shorn convict was the same man she had known under such different circumstances. "You are so changed, so changed!" she kept saying thoughtfully.

The local prison authorities took us into their custody on the barge, when our identity had been established by a careful comparison of our appearance with the photographs in our record-books. We were then marched through the town to the prison. On the way two young girls, scarcely over school-age, suddenly broke through our escort of soldiers, and rushed upon us. The surprised soldiers tried to catch hold of the intruders and send them off, but that

was not so easy. The girls ran like squirrels through our midst, announced themselves as the two sisters P., gave each of us a hasty kiss, and paid no attention to the calls of the officers and soldiers. Not till they had attained their end did they quit our ranks, and then they walked beside the procession, keeping us company to the prison gates.

We stayed a week in Tomsk, and during that time made acquaintance with all the exiles there, as they were allowed to visit us in the prison. This prison in which we were lodged was composed of a few wooden buildings and some barracks. Every room was filled to overflowing, for there were about a thousand prisoners of all classes, but mostly criminals—young and old together. Like ourselves (for we were left fairly free here), they spent the whole day in the spacious yard. Until now we "politicals" had been entirely separate from the ordinary criminals, but henceforward the convoy was composed of both classes, and I now learned to know the criminal world from personal observation.

One day as I strolled about the yard one of these men spoke to me. He was a powerful-looking fellow of about thirty, red-haired, and with well-marked features. He was evidently a dandy among the convicts. Beneath the long grey coat, which he wore thrown loosely over his shoulders, could be seen a white linen shirt adorned at the throat with a gay tie; round his waist was wound a brightly coloured scarf, and to this his chains were cunningly attached, so that they made no noise whatever in walking. The leather protections beneath the ankle-rings were artistically fastened to look like the tops of his boots. A round cap pushed carelessly back on the side of his head was the crowning touch to his elegance, which the moustache, curling upward, finally completed. Everything denoted an aristocrat of criminal society.

"How many years have you got?" he asked after a polite greeting. And on my reply he continued, "And you mean to stay it out?"

"I can hardly do otherwise," I said.

"That depends. If you like, we can arrange a 'swop.'"[1]

I understood what he meant. In 1879 some political exiles—Vladimir Debagòrio-Makrièvitch, Paul Orlov, and V. Isbitsky—exchanged identities with three ordinary criminals, and got away. When this had become known, however, the authorities had at once taken stringent precautions against a repetition of the affair. The papers of political prisoners were most carefully made out and photographs attached; they were sent by special convoy if moved from one place to another; and besides this, each one was confided to the personal charge of one of the soldiers. But when I set all this before the man he was not in the least abashed.

"Nonsense! We can do it in spite of all their paraphernalia!"

I knew already from books and from the tales of comrades that a peculiar organisation exists among the convicted criminals in Siberia, the principle of which is in a manner oligarchic. A small band of the more strong-willed and energetic gaol-birds governs the rest. They are called the "Ivans"; they decide all matters relating to their "party," both in prison and *en route*, and institute their own rules quite independently of the recognised

[1] A "swop" is carried out in the following way. A convict under heavy sentence—of so many years' penal servitude, *e.g.*—takes an opportunity of exchanging personalities, so to speak, with one of the ordinary criminals who is simply being deported. A member of this class will undertake the business for a ridiculously small compensation. Then at the first station whence the exiles are to be despatched to their separate destination the supposed exile escapes, to wander about in Siberia, and, if lucky, find his way back to European Russia. The other who has taken his place reveals after a time his true character, and confesses that he exchanged with So-and-so at such and such a place. The matter is investigated, and the culprit receives a hundred lashes and a year's hard labour. It is generally the very lowest class of criminals who offer themselves as merchandise in these cases—wretched outcasts, who only receive a trifle—a few roubles, perhaps—as their share of the reward. The organisers of the traffic, the leaders of their *artèl* (union), see to it that when once a prisoner undertakes a "swop" he sticks to his part. If he dare attempt to betray them he is simply murdered.

authorities. The rank and file yield them slavish obedience, however unjust and terrible their orders may be. I saw at once that I had one of these tyrants before me.

"I don't see how it could be done," said I; and indeed, the difficulties appeared to me quite insurmountable.

"Do you see that brook?" said the "Ivan." "Well, in the course of every year one or two corpses are found in that brook. We arrange a 'swop'; one of us changes with you, and the chief person concerned disappears down there. Do you understand?"

I could not quite see what he meant, and was horror-struck when he explained his plan, which was as follows:—I was to make the exchange before the warders got to know us "politicals" individually, and the man with whom I exchanged must be as like me as possible. Of course, when the "politicals" were to be sent on, their identity would first be inquired into; but then it would only appear that Deutsch was missing. To accomplish this the "Ivan" would simply murder his companion who had taken my place, and throw his corpse into the stream. I should not be found; or if my unfortunate substitute's body eventually came to light, it would be taken for granted that it was mine, and that I had committed suicide or been murdered. I myself, in the meantime, should be sent to the dead man's destination as an ordinary criminal, and could afterwards escape thence—not a difficult matter for that class of prisoner. For perpetrating this villainy the man only asked a mere trifle—twenty or thirty roubles—which blood-money he would have had to share with quite a number of accomplices. He assured me that such enterprises were by no means uncommon, and always succeeded.

I listened to him with the fascination of horror and astonishment. He treated the subject with perfect calm and indifference, as if discussing the simplest piece of business in the world, and seemed to find my rejection of his proposal most incomprehensible. Afterwards, when

I had come to know the country better, I realised that this was a typical example of the manners and customs of the ordinary criminals, and nothing out of the common. As I have said, henceforward we were to have these gentry for travelling companions, and it may be imagined what that meant.

Another batch of our comrades took leave of us at Tomsk, and we were now only fourteen in number, including Maria Kalyùshnaya, Barbara Shtchulèpnikòva, and Liubov Tchemodànova. We learned that the authorities proposed to separate these ladies from us here, and send them on for the remainder of their journey with a party of married convicts of the ordinary class. As, however, we heard from those who knew that in such a party, surrounded by the unruly band of criminals, they would have endless disagreeables and hardships to put up with, we sent a petition to Petersburg, with the consent of the governor, and obtained permission for our women comrades to remain in our detachment.

CHAPTER XVIII

BY WAY OF THE CONVOY-STATIONS—A CLUMSY OFFICER —THE VAGABOND—A MAN-HUNT

THE real hardships of the journey now began for the "politicals." From Moscow to Tomsk, over three thousand miles, the conditions of travelling had been more or less European; but henceforward we were to go entirely by road, crawling from one halting-station to another by short stages. In the terrible Siberian cold, in the glowing heat of summer, in all weathers, without regard to the fitness or unfitness of the road, parties of a hundred prisoners are despatched from Tomsk regularly on fixed days of the week, parties which consist alternately of men only, and of families—men, women, and children. The day's march is a stage of from sixteen to twenty miles, and every third day is a rest. At this tortoise-like pace—on an average about thirteen miles a day—the long wandering lasts for many weeks and months, under the most wretched conditions of life.

In the damp rooms of the convoy-stations, the air of which is loaded with every evil odour imaginable, the convicts lie squeezed together on the bare boards of the two sloping wooden shelves, one above the other, which do duty for bed-places. These invariably swarm with myriads of parasites; sleep is probably impossible for half the night, and early in the morning the prisoners are driven forth to begin afresh the weary march. Long before sunrise the criminal contingent will be standing drawn up in the yard, to wait there in the cold until the roll is called,

IN A SIBERIAN PRISON

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and at last the signal to start is given. At the head of the procession march the older criminals, seasoned rascals most of them, the "Ivans." The majority of them have trodden this path more than once already, and know every brook and copse on the way. They go at a quick pace, in serried ranks, and easily do their four miles an hour, or even more. Behind them the other criminals straggle painfully along in irregular groups separated by long stretches of road. Then come carts with the sick and exhausted and the baggage; and lastly, the "politicals" in the rear, two or three together in each one-horse cart, under the charge of their special escort.

This strange procession extends itself along the road for about three-quarters of a mile, and raises clouds of dust, from which we in the rearguard have most to suffer. To add to our woes there is the special scourge of those regions, the Siberian midge. Swarms of those terrible little creatures kept us company, not only attacking our hands and faces, and getting into mouth, nose, ears, and eyes, but inserting themselves beneath our clothing, and inflicting tortures of irritation. The only—and even these inefficient—means of protection are nets of horsehair, with which we had taken care to provide ourselves.

After the first ten miles or so there is a halt in some woodland clearing, or by a spring or stream. The criminals here break their fast, usually only on dry bread, and perhaps some of them have not even that. Their feeding is managed in this way: each man receives daily five to twelve kopecks,[1] according to the locality through which they are passing (where prices depend on the result of the last harvest), and also according to the "rank" of the prisoner, for even here there are class distinctions and privileges. This allowance is only under the most favourable circumstances sufficient to satisfy hunger; it covers, at a pinch, the cost of bread, tea, and a few vegetables. But gambling is so deeply rooted a passion among the criminal

[1] A kopeck is equal to a farthing.—*Trans.*

prisoners that they will stake their last coin, and he who loses everything has to go hungry. His only resource then is to beg; and whenever we passed through a village some of the most destitute always went begging, under the soldiers' supervision. They would station themselves before a hut and start a pitiful song, when the Siberian women would throw out pieces of bread to them. Travellers, too, whom we met would give them alms, and these gifts were shared among the whole party, for the criminals too had their *artèl*, or union.

After the short rest the party would set out again in the same marching order, and try to reach the halting-station before the noonday heat began. As soon as they arrived at the station the advance party would crowd round the door, ready to rush in directly it was opened; and then would begin the battle for the best sleeping-places, the weaker being thrust aside or trampled down by the stronger. At our first sight of this mad fighting and struggling among some hundred men in a narrow space we thought they would kill each other, but generally the wild tumult of blows, kicks, and curses did not result in anything serious. Of course the "Ivans" came off triumphant, having secured the best places for themselves, while the old and weak had to be content with the worst corners. The crowding, dirt, stench, and noise made these prisons veritable hells on earth.

The halting-stations were usually tumbledown, one-storied buildings made of rough-hewn tree-trunks, and were divided inside by passages into two, three, or four rooms. Near this prison-building would be a house for the officer in command and another for the soldiers, the whole enclosed by a stockade of posts about fifteen feet high, closely fitted together, and pointed at their upper ends. There are two classes of halting-stations:—larger ones, where the days of rest are spent, and where an officer is always in residence, and smaller ones, which are only used as lodging for one night.

ROLL-CALL OF PRISONERS AT A HALTING-STATION

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When the question of places had been settled the prisoners would all come out into the yard. Here there were generally market-women with their wares outspread, and a regular bargaining would ensue. Of course, the convicts were always ready to cheat the women and steal from them, and the latter would then raise loud cries of lamentation; as, however, in such cases the convicts all stuck together like one man, no inquiry could ever elicit any evidence in favour of the complainants.

Washing and cooking also went on in the yard, a big fire being kindled in the middle of it; and no one ever thought of danger to the wooden buildings and stockade.

The "politicals" were given a separate room; and our first task on arrival was always to screen off a part with sheets and rugs to make a place for our ladies. The position of these poor women, obliged to camp out in such close proximity to us men, was in many ways very uncomfortable, especially as soldiers were often quartered with us; but we did our best to spare them any unpleasantness that could be avoided.

For some of our party the greatest hardship of our long journey was the early rising; they needed sleep beyond everything, and from force of habit could not get it early in the night. As the ordinary criminals liked early hours —and the earlier the better—there were often disputes between us on the subject. We usually arranged the evening before with the officer of the convoy, and also with the headman of the ordinary convicts, and appointed six a.m. as the hour for starting; but once we had a regular battle on this point. We "politicals" seldom made use of the courtyard until the criminals were shut up for the night; there was no room for us till then, and it was therefore only toward nightfall that we could get out into the open air. One evening, however, some of us were in the yard, when the officer came up and ordered us to go inside. We were exceedingly surprised at this piece of gratuitous interference, and asked what it meant.

"Make haste, and be off, or I shall order the start to be made at four o'clock to-morrow morning," said the officer.

"But you have just agreed that we shall start at six," said we.

"Well, and now I say that we shall start at four."

"We shall stick to the original arrangement, and won't stir before six," we returned.

"We shall see about that!" was the rejoinder; and off he went.

Evidently we should have a tussle, but we were unanimous in our resolve not to give in to any such arbitrary proceeding.

Next morning the watch awakened us while it was still dark, and said the officer had given orders that we must be moving. We paid no attention to this. The ordinary convicts had been already called out, and were in the yard ready for the start, when at four o'clock the sergeant came and repeated the order. Some of us then dressed, but the others remained lying on the plank beds. Meanwhile the convicts began to grumble at being kept freezing in the cold; they cursed and threatened, and made a great to-do outside our windows. The officer himself now appeared, accompanied by one of the soldiers, and again repeated his order to start. We did not stir, and he called to his people—

"Drive them out with the butt-ends of your rifles!"

This would now most certainly have become a serious affair if the soldiers had obeyed at once, for we were prepared to defend ourselves. Fortunately they hesitated a moment, and that saved us.

"What are you doing?" cried some of us. "Do you want to have bloodshed? That would not be pleasant for you. You have broken your promise, and in no case are we obliged to begin the march so early; the instructions only say that a party must reach its destination before sunset."

At this moment the sergeant ca ne up in haste.

"Captain," said he, "the convicts are in rebellion; they want to break in here."

"Let us get at them!" we heard them shouting outside; "we'll soon make them show their legs!"

"There you are!" we cried to the officer. "You have brought this on yourself. It is your fault for having inflamed those men against us."

The man lost his presence of mind in face of this danger; and, scared out of his wits, instead of giving orders, appealed to us for counsel.

"In God's name, what's to be done?"

We advised him to let the fellows start off at once, under command of the sergeant, so as to get them out of the way.

"At six o'clock we will be ready, and will go after them; but we won't start a minute sooner."

He went off somewhat humbled, and gave the order as we had suggested. We drank our tea very peacefully, and got ready at our leisure. From time to time the orderly appeared, and asked if we would start; but we always looked at the time and said it was only so many minutes to six. Punctually on the stroke of the hour we got up and set off after the rest of the convoy.

This occurrence had the effect of winning us the respect and sympathy of most of the convicts. Our firmness and decision pleased them and impressed them. They were surprised that such a handful of us—fourteen men and women—should have successfully resisted the domineering of an officer, who had at his command a hundred soldiers and their own contingent into the bargain.

Friendly relations were established between our two divisions, and throughout our journey we never came into collision. One only of the convicts had a grudge against us, and took every opportunity of evincing his dislike. He was an old hand, had repeatedly escaped from prison, and was now being transported as a criminal of "unknown antecedents." He was evidently from the working-classes,

but was distinguished by keen reasoning powers, and had read an astonishing amount. Reading seemed to be his master passion, but the works of reactionary authors exclusively had fallen into his hands—Katkov, Meshtchersky, etc.—and his views were according. He had formed really remarkable opinions on politics in general, and Socialism in particular. He was genuinely convinced that the revolutionists had killed Alexander II. solely because he had emancipated the serfs! He accused us before all the other convicts of being either discontented aristocrats or their paid agents. After this, several of us entered into discussion with him, and tried to convert him. By degrees our arguments began to take effect; he begged us to lend him books, and sought our society whenever possible. I had many talks with him, and tried to get him to tell me about his past and his wandering life; but I never succeeded in learning who and what he really was. He remained to the end the "Ivan of unknown antecedents," as he was called in his record-book. Yet he would readily tell us tales of his vagabondage. I asked him on one occasion how he managed to get through to European Russia when he escaped from Siberia.

"Oh, where's the difficulty?" he replied. "The chief thing is to have the Urals behind your back; then you get a train or a steamboat, and stop wherever you like. I would go in that way to Kharkov, or Kiëv, or Odessa, or Rostov, hire a room, and live quite comfortably. I was always respectably dressed; my passport was all right (that we see to ourselves), and so nobody bothered about me. The one thing I cared about was to subscribe to a library and get books. I've read all sorts of good things—Gaboriau, Paul de Kock, Ponson du Terrail, and lots more beside. At midday I would dine at a restaurant, and go to the theatre in the evening sometimes."

"That sounds very nice. But where did you get the money for all that?" I inquired, with interest.

Of earning a living in the ordinary sense there was

ESCAPED CONVICT-TRAMP (BRODYAGA)

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evidently no question here. One would suppose the gentleman to have been living on private means.

"Money? Oh, I took whatever there was to take!"

"Well, tell me just what that means," I asked him. And he thereupon explained his theory of life.

"Above everything, it's my motto that 'Self's the man.' I don't hold with joint-stock business in our way of life. Thieves make bad partners, you know. You run the chance of being murdered or split on at every turn; so I always work on my own hook."

He then related how he "worked" at burglary, pocket-picking, or petty thefts, each as occasion served.

"Of course," he observed, "sometimes you have a bit of bad luck and get caught. Then off you go to Siberia, and have to begin all over again. I expect I shall go on all my life ringing the changes on Europe and Asia," he concluded, with perfect composure.

I realised from the narrations of this man and other criminals the astonishing numbers belonging to this vagabond class. It is generally recruited from the ranks of those condemned to transportation for the less serious offences; but some among its members have been sentenced to penal servitude, and have then "swopped." As soon as the sun of spring shines out, not one of them remains at his place of exile; they all manage to get away and make for European Russia. They usually choose byways and tracks known only to themselves through the *taigà* or primeval forest, but occasionally they wander quite calmly along the great Moscow high road—until the completion of the railway the only regular way of transit between Eastern Siberia and Europe. We ourselves often met these tramps on the road, travelling in couples or in quite considerable bands. They came along in their prison clothes, a bundle and a small kettle on their backs; always skirting the edge of the forest, so as to vanish within its recesses if need be. At sight of our party they would stop for a chat with the convicts, among whom they

often found old acquaintances. The officers and soldiers seemed not to trouble their heads about them in the slightest degree.

"Where are you off to?" the officer of our convoy once asked, when some tramps saluted him, cap in hand.

"Your Excellency knows; we're going to the Government's lodgings," the rogues replied, grinning.

"Oh, get along with you, then, in God's name!" the officer laughed; and then told us that he had escorted this very lot into exile a few months back.

"Government lodgings" was the recognised euphemism for prison, and it was perfectly true that most of these vagabonds would find their way back there soon enough; by autumn hardly a man of them would be still at large. Meanwhile they begged their way along. The Siberian natives were liberal in almsgiving; partly from obedience to their religion, which enjoins charitable deeds, but not a little from fear, as, if refused, these tramps are not slow in revenging themselves. In many places there was a regular custom of putting out food on the window-sill at night—a bowl of thickened milk, a piece of bread, or some curd-cheese. The peasants would even leave open the door of the bath-house (generally placed at a little distance from the other houses), that the wanderers might find shelter. They were admitted very unwillingly to the dwelling-houses, from a not unjustifiable mistrust of their conduct; and that reminds me of the following episode.

One day as we were on the march a criminal told me that he had known Tchernishevsky.[1] This naturally excited my interest, and I asked him how and where he had met that great martyr to our cause. He told me that he had once before been exiled, and sent to Viluisk, in Yakutsk. Tchernishevsky was there at the same time;

[1] This celebrated scholar and political writer, though not an active member of the revolutionary party, was arrested in 1866 and condemned to penal servitude. During his imprisonment in the Fortress of Peter and Paul he wrote his famous novel, *What Should We Do?* which had such a great influence on the youth of his time.—*Trans.*

they were let out of prison together, and interned in the same town. The man could tell me nothing except some details of the way in which Tchernishevsky had passed his time in exile; but that was enough to make my heart warm towards him. It seemed to me that a criminal who had known personally one of the noblest men in Russia must have something in him a little different from the rest. When he had told me all he could of Tchernishevsky, I asked him how he himself came to be going back into exile.

"I got sick of that cursed hole, Viluisk," he said, "and got away with some other tramps. We'd been a few days on the road when one stormy night we came to a village. It was pouring in torrents, and we could find nobody who would let us in, till at last an old man opened the door of his hut. We begged him in God's name to give us shelter.

"'Well,' he said, 'will you promise to leave us old folks in peace?'

"'What do you take us for, grandfather?' said we. 'Have pity on us!'

"So he let us in, and the old woman gave us something to eat, and they allowed us to lie on the stove by turns. Well, they went to sleep, and we just *did for them*, and went off with everything that could be of any use to us. We didn't get far: the peasants came after us and caught us; and then there was the usual game—trial and sentence to penal servitude. But on the way here I made a 'swop,' and now I'm going into exile as 'of unknown antecedents.'"

On their side, however, the people of Siberia are often guilty of great brutality towards the convict-tramps, sometimes shooting them down like beasts of the chase simply in order to steal their clothes, boots, and the products of their begging. I have been told, for instance, by people whose evidence is to be trusted, that the following is a typical instance.

A tramp had hired himself out to a peasant for the

winter. When spring laid the road open, he received the whole sum due to him, and took his departure. His wages amounted to the veriest trifle, for the peasants drive hard bargains with the poor rascals; but his master grudged parting with even this miserable pittance, and after his departure took his gun and went on the chase. Siberians are keen huntsmen and dead shots; they are as much at home in the forest as the wild animals. This man soon got on the convict's trail, caught him up, shot him down ruthlessly, and left the body to the beasts of prey, while he went home with the spoils.

Throughout our journey we constantly heard tales of unrecognised corpses found, and shocking crimes never unravelled. Siberia was then a wild, forsaken land, untraversed by roads save for the one great Moscow highway. The government of the country districts, entirely in the hands of the police, was corrupt from top to bottom. What wonder if events that chill one's blood with horror take place there without exciting more than a passing comment? The life of a human being is not valued highly in itself anywhere throughout the Tsar's dominions; but in Siberia it counts for absolutely nothing, as my own eyes often testified. Even now, when distinct progress has been made in many respects, and the administration of justice greatly reformed (since 1897), this state of things is little changed.

CHAPTER XIX

THE FOREST—UNSUCCESSFUL ATTEMPTS AT ESCAPE—THE PEOPLE WE MET—THE CRIMINAL WORLD—THE CONVOY OFFICERS

OUR journey was for the most part accomplished during the Siberian summer. The forest, through which the highway runs for thousands of versts, is then in fullest beauty; and from the many different species of trees is wafted an indescribably delicious perfume. Countless birds flit among the branches, and fill the air with song. Life seems everywhere the more ebullient for its long winter sleep, and throughout all nature the tide of energy is at its highest. A riot of joy was visible everywhere, and we alone seemed to strike a discordant note, as we wandered on towards the prison that awaited us. Yet even we felt born anew; our open-air life worked wonders, following on our long imprisonment. Many who had left Moscow weak and ill became robust in health during the journey.

The Moscow high-road is, as I have said, the only means of transit, nevertheless it is kept in an incredibly bad condition. It has never been properly made, and during the damp weather of early spring, or after a downpour in summer, vehicles are often axle-deep in mud. Along the road, at intervals of fifteen to twenty versts, there are villages, or sometimes small towns. To the north and south no traces of human dwellings are to be found; the eternal forest extends for thousands of versts, and only a

few nomad tribes of half-savage hunters or herdsmen roam through its depths. Whilst our party rested, or even during the march, we "politicals" would often leave the road, and accompanied by a guard would dive into the woods to gather flowers and berries. A strange feeling would steal over one. A dozen steps into the thicket, and one is absolutely alone, not a soul to be seen. One dreams of being free and one's own master; but the rattle of fetters, or the glitter of a bayonet brings back grim reality, and soon we are recalled by the soldiers, for the party must not be kept waiting.

The officers make no difficulty about these little excursions, although they are forbidden by the regulations. At first this surprised me; but I soon saw it was simply because everyone was convinced that escape was quite impracticable. For although at first sight it may appear an easy thing to hide in the undergrowth and get away, as a matter of fact very few "politicals" have ever even attempted it, and only one—Dzvonkyèvitch—when actually on the march. He had been condemned to penal servitude for life, and ran away from his escort into the forest; but the soldiers caught and frightfully maltreated him. If the officers had not come up he would have been murdered out of hand. He was taken half dead to the hospital in Krasnoyarsk, where—thanks to his strong constitution—he recovered from his severe wounds, though he will bear traces of them for the rest of his life. This had taken place just a year before our arrival at Krasnoyarsk.

Several attempts have also been made to escape from the halting-stations, but with no greater success. It must be remembered that Siberia is so sparsely populated that every traveller on the road is an object of universal attention, and the authorities are therefore soon made aware of the whereabouts of a runaway, if he be a "political" whom they are anxious to capture. Besides, the fugitives are often forced to come in of themselves. They do not know the paths through the forest, so

AN ATTEMPT AT ESCAPE

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familiar to the ordinary criminals, but wander helplessly about, and are thankful at last if they chance to hit the high-road once more, and—half famished—seek the nearest village. In such cases the peasants are eager to assist the authorities and thereby earn a reward; and as soon as they discover a political runaway they unfailingly deliver him up to the police.

Up to the present time the Russian Government has been amply justified in regarding Siberia as one vast prison, whose natural conditions offer more insuperable obstacles to escape than do iron bars, high walls, or any number of guards. But this is only to the "politicals," to whom the forest ways are strange. The criminals, as I have said, are quite at home in the wild woods; and it is easily conceivable that to many of us the thought has occurred of making common cause with these people, and escaping in their company. Such attempts, however, have more than once had a fatal ending. The rascals are always ready to murder for the sake of gain; a "political's" money, and even his clothes, are quite sufficient bait. In this manner it is supposed that Ladislas Isbitsky came by his death in the year 1880. He had successfully negotiated a "swop," had escaped as an ordinary criminal—and then disappeared for ever, probably murdered by the tramps to whose guidance he had entrusted himself.

Another instance of this kind was related to me by a political exile, who, when himself a fugitive in company with some convict-tramps, chanced to overhear them planning to murder him in his sleep. For weeks he was obliged to feign sleep at night while really remaining awake—a terrible task, as may readily be imagined.

These criminals do not, indeed, even trust one another when on the road; and it is said that when two of them have to enter a narrow path, there will be a sharp dispute as to who is to go first, the one in front never feeling safe from an attack in the rear by the companion of his march.

Other dangers also lie in wait for the wanderer. Our comrade Vlastòpoulo, sentenced to penal servitude for life, narrowly escaped being devoured by a bear, during his flight in company with Kòziriov (another revolutionist condemned to penal servitude). He described to me how the bear came so suddenly upon them that they had no time to fly, and could only back against a tree, supposing their last hour had come. Bruin, however, must have had a full meal, for he trotted quietly by, apparently without noticing them! These two fugitives suffered terribly from hunger and thirst during their wanderings through the woods.

Although we had had no personal experience of these various dangers, most of us were so well aware of them that no plan of escape during the journey entered into our calculations; but two of our comrades could not resist the temptation to weave schemes of the kind. These were Maria Kalyùshnaya and the student Yordan—the former condemned to twenty years' penal servitude, and the latter "administratively" exiled to Eastern Siberia for five years. They were both young, barely twenty, and their longing for freedom was overpowering. None of their projects of flight were practicable, however, and they did not attempt to carry them into execution. Both these young creatures died in prison; Maria Kalyùshnaya's story, which I shall have to relate further on, being a specially sad one.

We had many opportunities, during our long march, of becoming acquainted with the people whose dwellings are beside the great highway. A certain air of comfort and well-being was often visible about them, and some of the larger settlements had the pleasant appearance of a Russian provincial town. Roomy, well-built houses, occasionally of more than one story, decorated with carving and provided with tidy hedges and gates, lined the road sometimes for several versts. Curtains and flower-pots showed in the windows; the rooms were often carpeted and furnished comfortably, sometimes even ex-

hibiting the luxury of Austrian bentwood furniture. The cattle, so far as we could see, were finer and better kept than is usual among the Russian peasantry.

This well-to-do appearance was only in part to be ascribed to the productiveness of the husbandry in these regions. Trade and the conduct of traffic were the principal resources of the inhabitants; for this road was the only means of communication by land between Europe and the northern parts of Asia. Caravans in lengthy processions, sometimes in such numbers that the road was practically blocked, travelled along the great highway; and the country people found employment in the transport of both goods and passengers. The regular posting-stations were often unequal to the demands made upon them, and travellers—merchants especially—were obliged to hire private vehicles and pay dearly for them. Besides these legitimate industries, the inhabitants had another extremely lucrative source of gain. Many villages had won for themselves an evil name in this connection, and were known as "thieves' towns," because no caravan ever passed through them without paying toll of its wares; sometimes a chest of tea would be stolen, sometimes a horse, and so on. It was asserted that in some of these places the inhabitants made raids on travellers by night, and lived by highway robbery. It is characteristic of the country that this reputation lowered no man in public estimation. Anyone was received in "good society" if he were rich, no matter whether he were well known to have robberies by the score upon his conscience; he might, indeed, even be asked to fill the most honourable offices—such as churchwarden, mayor, or head of the commune. Later, when I was living in a Siberian town as an exile released from prison under police surveillance, I was frequently told by trustworthy persons, with every detail, how such and such a citizen, universally respected and esteemed, had made his fortune by cheating and robbery, or even by downright murder. There were numbers of people whose past

could not bear inspection; and many of them, even after becoming possessed of wealth in superfluity, could not quite give up their old practices. It so fell out, for example, at the end of the eighties, that General Barabash, the military governor of Tchita (the capital of the Transbaikalian Government), gave a banquet, to which all the notabilities of the place were invited, and that the highly respectable merchant and mayor Alexèiev broke off in the middle of the feasting and went straight from table to waylay the passing night-mail. This worthy citizen, with one of his friends, galloped after the mail-coach, murdered the driver, seriously wounded the guard, seized the bag containing the registered letters, and made off. The guard, however, whom they had left for dead, was rescued; and as an unusually energetic magistrate took the matter in hand, the whole story came out, and could not be hushed up in the customary manner. The case was brought before a court-martial, and the highway robbers were condemned to death.

These colonies by the great road had had very diverse origins, and were sharply differentiated from each other in character. There were more or less pure Russian villages, neighboured by barbaric Buriat settlements; and there were also villages inhabited exclusively by members of various sects, exiled from Russia and forcibly established there as a punishment for their daring to fall away from the Orthodox State religion. Those that I found specially interesting were the villages of the so-called Subòtniki (Sabbatarians). The members of this sect are Russian by nationality, yet their religion is the Mosaic in its strictest form.

It was curious in the extreme to find these typical representatives of the Slav race considering themselves Jews by virtue of their religion, and still stranger to hear them boasting of the prerogatives of their Israelitish faith. In their manner of life and occupations they differ in no way from ordinary Russian peasants; although in

decency and prosperity their villages are far above those of their Christian neighbours.

Those of our criminal contingent who had travelled this way more than once already were well acquainted with the manners and customs of the Siberian people; many of them were veritable mines of information, and could relate tales of uncommon interest. In their narrations the Siberians usually figured in an unfavourable light; for the criminals hate them from the bottom of their hearts, and ascribe all kinds of evil qualities to them, being, one and all, firmly persuaded that although their own standard of conduct is by no means exalted, they are infinitely higher in the moral scale than the Siberians.

"Heaven knows we are rascals through and through, good-for-nothings, and all that; but *that* lot are far and away worse," was their dictum. They showered on the Siberians all sorts of contemptuous names, which were quite incomprehensible to us, but seemed to provoke their recipients terribly. This mutual antipathy probably arose from the fact of the parties knowing one another only too well, and from the injuries inflicted by each on the other during past generations.

We came into such close contact with the world of crime during our travels that we could soon recognise what Lombroso calls "the criminal type." On the whole, the criminals made a more favourable impression on me than I had expected. Certainly there was much about them unpleasant, and even repulsive; but this was, I think, less due to their character as a class than to the special influence of the "Ivans"—a quite peculiar type, who imparted their tone more or less to all the others. With the exception of these leaders, and of a small number of the worst criminals, who had not succeeded in "swopping," the majority consisted of very average men of the working class, with the good and bad qualities of their order. Their leading characteristics were dumb acquiescence in their lot and a shy dread of anyone who would attempt to better it.

They were for the most part just as good-natured and ready to help one another as is commonly the case with workers of the lower classes. Among the ordinary prisoners, too, were to be found many individuals who could in no sense be ranked as criminals. Russian village communes have the power of rejecting from their midst members whom they consider undesirable; and these outcasts can then be sent to settle in Siberia, without any judicial sentence, but simply by the desire of a majority in their commune. Moreover, this verdict of the commune is often delivered without any real majority being convinced as to the unfitness of the offending member; the clerk to the commune and two or three of the richer peasants and usurers (*Kulaki*) can easily manage to get rid of a poor wretch who does not happen to please them. It would be impossible to calculate how many crying injustices are thus perpetrated on the destitute and helpless among the peasantry. The victims of such barbarous and arbitrary proceedings who were among our party, had many sad stories to tell, which only corroborated what I myself had seen going on in country districts. With one or two exceptions, the exiles belonging to this category were quite average specimens of the Russian peasant.

There were also included among these ordinary prisoners members of various religious sects, exiled on that account, and they were very far removed from the criminal type. These sectarians are admitted, by all who know Siberia best, to form the steadiest and the most industrious element of the population. The sectarians in our party of ordinary prisoners always avoided any participation in the fights, quarrels, and rowdyism of the others, and tried not to fall out either with the leaders of the convict band, on the one hand, nor with the authorities on the other. It was their custom to accept humbly all insults and injuries inflicted on them as trials sent them by God.

Those prisoners who had minor punishments to undergo, and who had least on their conscience, were for the

most part timid, submissive, even broken-spirited. Among them were the unfortunate wretches whom I have described as gambling away their food-money for whole weeks together. They then literally starved, or sold themselves into the hands of the "swop" organisation for a beggarly sum. They were treated with utter contempt by the other criminals, and among them went by the name of "biscuits," a rather descriptive title for these pale, dried-up, emaciated creatures. These "biscuits" were the pariahs of their society, and all the dirtiest and most disagreeable work—cleaning out of privies, etc.—fell to their share as a matter of course. They seemed to have lost all power of will; and gambling—the source of all their sufferings—was the only thing they cared for. They were always ready to steal anything that came in their way, except from the "Ivans," which would have had dire results for themselves if discovered, probably a murderous thrashing. I only knew one case of that kind, when a poor young fellow stole a piece of bread from one of the "Ivans," and the *artèl* at once decided that he should be punished exemplarily, "because he had stolen from his own people."

I have spoken before of this *artèl*, an extremely interesting institution which has existed among criminals from time immemorial. It is based on stringent and unalterable rules, the chief of which is that each individual must yield implicit obedience to the will of the whole *artèl*. All members are supposed to have, *de jure*, equal rights in the organisation; but, *de facto*, the confirmed criminals, the old experienced rogues and vagabonds, are the preponderating element, and it is the "Ivans" that govern the rest ruthlessly in their own proper interest. It is *their* will that passes for the will of the whole body. Without the sanction of the *artèl* no agreement between individuals has any force; only with its consent can any "swop" be carried out, and thus a portion of the price always goes into the common exchequer. Once the sanction of the *artèl* is given

there is no holding back; a criminal who refused to fulfil his "swop" when he had agreed to it and received his pay would have the whole combined *artèl* against him. But such a case never occurs; and fear of the *artèl's* vengeance is too great for any treachery by its members. The lawful authorities would have no power to shield such a traitor, and could not get him out of the clutches of the organisation; for if he were moved to another prison the *artèl* there would take on the feud and mete out vengeance to him, the leaders invariably finding means to communicate with each other. In one respect the solidarity of the *artèl* is especially strong: it is represented in all dealings with the authorities by its *stàrosta* or head-man, elected by the prisoners themselves from among their own ranks. This is a post of honour, and is naturally always obtained by an experienced and crafty rogue. He makes all arrangements concerning his constituents, receives their food-money, and sees to its distribution. His authority over the common herd is limitless; but he is directly dependent on the leaders—the "Ivans"—who have carried through his election, and would be powerless without their support, so that he has to keep on good terms with them. The office of *stàrosta* has its pecuniary advantages, and it often happens that candidates for the post pay a considerable sum for the votes of the powerful "Ivans."

A less important, but equally profitable post is that of the storekeeper, who trades with the other prisoners in tea, sugar, tobacco, and other things of the kind, and—secretly—in spirits and playing-cards. This privilege is granted by the *artèl* for a fixed time to one of the candidates for the office, who pays for it a certain sum into the common chest. The chief profits accrue from the illicit sale of spirits and hiring out of playing-cards. At night, as soon as the ordinary prisoners were shut in, and often even by day, they might be seen squatting together in groups to indulge in a game of chance. They would gamble away not only their meagre food-allowance, but clothes, linen, boots, the

property of the State; for which they were of course accountable, and for the loss of which—if discovered—they were liable to severe punishment. Half naked, save for some miserable rags, the condition of the wretched "biscuits" in bad weather was pitiable indeed; and when the cold days of autumn came on they could be seen shivering from head to foot, running instead of walking when on the march, to try and keep warm. It was hard to understand how these men could endure the hunger and cold they brought on themselves. We attempted to relieve them, but could do very little; as, firstly, our own means were very limited; and, secondly, they staked everything we gave them, at the first opportunity, despite the most solemn promises. There was always an eager crowd around any players, following the game with as much excitement as the principals themselves could manifest; and occasionally a lucky winner would share some of his gains with his starving comrades. It was the custom, too, for the storekeeper to treat the whole company when his term of office expired; that was a feast-day for the hungry, and you might hear them say: "To-day we'll eat our fill; the storekeeper pays"!

The officers of the escort on principle never interfered with the affairs of the *artèl*, the prisoners themselves managing to keep order so as to avoid any occasion for such interference or coercion. It was certainly remarkable that this crowd of people, many of whom were hardened robbers and murderers, should have been so easy to rule; for the numbers of the escort were relatively small. No prisoner attempted to escape, that being strictly forbidden by their rules during the journey for fear of reprisals by the authorities against the *artèl*. There were squabbles and scuffles, but never anything that necessitated the interference of the soldiery; and though doubtless there was an inordinate amount of drinking (for spirits were always to be had), no drunkard was allowed to carry on any brawling under the eye of the officer. The others saw to that.

There was a tacit understanding between the *artèl* and the officer; the latter knew that if the prisoners were allowed a free hand in certain matters he could count on them to keep order among themselves, and never to cause him any trouble. He therefore looked the other way when regulations were disregarded, as, for instance, in the matter of fetters, which were always merely tied together, not riveted; so that though worn on the march they could be taken off at night—which was of course against rules. Among all the different convoy officers (and there were forty stationed on the route between Tomsk and Kara—men of very varied types), not one made any exception to this rule. I have never observed any abuse of their power in regard to the prisoners, nor that they were particularly rude and rough in dealing with them; still less that they ever attempted to mulct them of their food-money or other allowances. On the other hand, it often happens that these officers are prosecuted for shortcomings of this kind in connection with their subordinates, and even for direct peculation. It must be remembered that the halting-stations are established in the wilderness, far removed from the reach of the central authorities, military and civil. It is easy, therefore, for a commanding officer to abuse his position. Most of them get but a scanty education in the lower military schools, and are then sent out into the Siberian wilds, where many are naturally led to give the rein to their worst qualities. The majority of them know no pleasure but debauchery, and when drunk commit all kinds of excesses, gamble away the excise-money, maltreat their inferiors, and so on.

There were a few officers with a taste for economy, and they were less inclined to excess, but the soldiers were scarcely better off under their rule—perhaps worse—than under that of the rakes and drunkards; for these able financiers established such a thorough control of ways and means in their department that their unfortunate men were not only mercilessly fleeced, but made to do all sorts

of work in house and field in order to save paying for labour. However, this class was not a large one.

To us "politicals" most of the officers behaved with formal correctness, and tried to avoid any conflicts. But apart from their general attitude, there were numerous petty details—slight enough in themselves, but of great importance to us on such a long journey—that were sometimes subjects of dispute; for instance, the hour of starting in the early morning, as I have already mentioned; and we had discussions with various officers about other things, such as keeping the wooden tub in our room all night, which we declined to do, as it poisoned the air, and also on account of the ladies who had to share the room with us. If the officer were ill-tempered or obstinate, trifles like these might be the occasion of insults and bullying on his side that would lead to revolt and violence on ours; and then a court-martial with its cruel verdict loomed before us. Fortunately, things never went so far as that, —thanks partly to our having in our midst a few older and wiser heads, who exercised a calming influence over the rest, besides three men who had had considerable experience of intercourse with the authorities, as they were going to Siberia for the second time, having previously been "administratively" exiled—Malyòvany, Spandoni, and Tchuikòv. We owed much also to the exertions and tactful counsel of our head-man, Làzarev.

It happened sometimes that we came across officers who were ready to show us many small kindnesses—lending us newspapers and paying attention to our comfort in any way possible to them. On one or two occasions we had unexpected bits of good fortune. An officer, recognising a school-friend in one of our comrades — Snigiriòv, a veterinary surgeon—was much moved at the meeting, and during the two days of his accompanying us did all he could to help us. Another officer announced himself as a sympathiser with Socialism. He had mixed in revolutionary circles, and made no secret of his views, being

in entire agreement with us. He told us he read a good deal of forbidden literature, and we discussed many political problems with him. Naturally it was a pleasant surprise to find a man of kindred opinions among the instruments of despotism.

The polite behaviour of most officers towards us may possibly have been due to an amusingly mistaken notion, of which by chance we discovered symptoms. On entering one of the halting-stations we found in the room to which we were shown a plainly dressed man with handcuffs on his wrists. He turned out to be a political exile named Stephen Agàpov,[1] a factory hand, who was now being removed from Eastern to Western Siberia as a mitigation of his punishment, in accordance with the coronation manifesto of 1883. His wife, a Siberian peasant, accompanied him. Agàpov explained to us that when our party was expected the officer had ordered him to quit that room, because a party of "politicals" was coming, composed entirely of counts and princes, and that these noble personages would never put up with having a common workman in the room with them. Agàpov and his wife thought this no reason why they should be turned out of the room intended for political prisoners like themselves, and they refused to obey, which led to a violent scene, and Agàpov was put in irons. Worse still, the irate officer had another punishment in store for him. The pair had with them all their belongings—the fruits of hard work in Eastern Siberia—making a weight of luggage beyond what was permitted by the regulations. The officer immediately ordered everything above the prescribed weight to be sold by auction to the people of the place—a pure piece of malice, as even the ordinary exiles were always allowed excess luggage, and still more those who were benefiting by the act of grace.

[1] Agàpov was sentenced in the case of fifty Propagandists, in 1887, to three years and eight months' penal servitude. In 1880 he was released from prison and interned as a "colonist" in Eastern Siberia.

This tyrannical performance incensed us highly, and our good head-man went at once to the officer with an appeal for the release of our comrade from his fetters, which was granted without much ado. The comic part of the affair was that we ourselves should figure as princes and counts! In reality there was not one among us of such rank, but the legend had probably arisen from the addresses of letters sent by members of our party to Prince Volhònsky, Count Leo Tolstoi, and other well-known people of title. The affair had further consequences for the poor Agàpovs, as the officer reported them for disobedience, violence, etc., and they were sent to one of those "towns" to the north of Tobolsk that I have previously described—a far worse locality than that from which they were being brought as an act of clemency.

CHAPTER XX

FROM KRASNOYARSK TO IRKUTSK—MISUNDERSTANDINGS AND DISPUTES—THE WOMEN IN IRKUTSK PRISON

THE distance from Tomsk to Krasnoyarsk is about five hundred versts, and took us a full month to accomplish—twenty days on the march and ten days of rest between the stages. In Krasnoyarsk we were to wait a week, the ordinary prisoners being taken to the deportation prison and we ourselves lodged in the town gaol. On arriving there we were struck by the orderliness of the arrangements. The spacious new building was freshly whitewashed, and the whole place spotlessly clean; there was light and air in abundance, and there were no bars to the windows. We might have imagined that we had been brought to a decent hotel; I have certainly never seen another prison like it in either Siberia or Russia. When we entered the corridor, however, the air of comfort was somewhat lessened by inscriptions on the cell doors—"For murder"; "For robbery"; "For theft," etc. The governor, a pleasant-looking man, came up and ordered briefly and decisively that we should be placed in separate cells, and each according to his special class—convicts, exiles, and "administratives"—as that was the rule of the place. This did not suit us at all, and we explained to him the upset it would mean to our feeding arrangements; besides which, as during our two months' journey we had clubbed all our luggage together, it would be very awkward to change all that at a moment's notice. Moreover, we told him, we did

not wish to be treated in any different way from that prescribed by the regulations; that we were on transport, and therefore not supposed to conform to the rules of the place, which only applied to prisoners on remand or under sentence there. It had nothing to do with us, we said, that we had not been taken to the deportation prison where we belonged; and—to sum the matter up—we intended to do here as everywhere else, *i.e.* we should divide into groups convenient to ourselves in the different rooms, and might be locked up by night, but not by day, as set forth in our instructions.

The governor was much put about at receiving this answer, and declared he could on no account permit such an infringement of his regulations; but we refused to be lodged separately, and remained firmly planted, in the corridor, bag and baggage. The chief of police was now sent for: a perfect Falstaff, and—as it turned out—a very ignorant fellow. He likewise pronounced that we must conform to the regulations; to which we made our former reply, claiming our rights. As we were reasoning with him, one of the ladies happened to mention the word "*goumànnost*" (humanity), and—like the postmaster in Gogol's immortal comedy, who did not know whether "*mauvais ton*" might not mean something worse than "rascal"—so this good man became uneasy as to whether the unfamiliar word might not contain some offence, and demanded an explanation, with which—repressing our amusement—we furnished him. In the end this functionary decided that a still higher power must be referred to—the governor of the district; meanwhile there next successively appeared the colonel of the gendarmerie and the public prosecutor, to whom we again explained our position. They could find nothing to say against our representations, and after the discussion had lasted a long time—we camping out in the passage all the while, unable to unpack or prepare a meal (although we had eaten nothing since early morning and were fearfully hungry)—

at last the good people agreed that, pending the arrival of the governor's decision, we should make our own arrangements.

Next day as we sat at dinner the chief of police appeared in full parade uniform, with his helmet on.

"Gentlemen, I am to inform you of the governor's decision," he began ceremoniously, when our head-man interrupted him with the request that he would uncover his head.

"Gentlemen, you see I am in parade uniform, and the helmet is part of it; I cannot take it off," he stammered, doubtful if this were not some new form of insult.

"We do not care what sort of uniform it is," answered Làzarev, with imperturbable calm, "when you come into our room you will have the kindness to remove your head-covering."

"Now this is too much. I cannot, I really cannot take off my helmet," he declared, growing warm.

"Do as you please; but in that case we will not listen to the decision of the governor," said Làzarev.

The poor man looked from one to another, hesitated, and finally bared his worthy head and imparted to us the formal decision: the governor granted our desire.

I wonder how many officials have had to learn this elementary lesson in politeness from us.

In Krasnoyarsk our party was diminished to eleven in number. The veterinary surgeon Snigiriòv and the student Kornièнko were to remain in the government of Yenisei, and we had to leave Spandoni behind in the prison, as he was ill.

We were two months on the journey from Krasnoyarsk to Irkutsk, a thousand versts. In that whole distance there is only one town, Nijni-Udînsk; and even this scarcely deserves the title. Here we met comrades—a married couple named Novakòvsky—also on their way to Eastern Siberia. I had known Novakòvsky in Kiëv; he

had taken part in the 1876 demonstration in the Kazan Square in Petersburg, and had been banished to Siberia. After the coronation manifesto in 1883, he was moved from Balagansk, in the government of Irkutsk, to Minuisinsk, in the government of Yenisei; but now he and his wife were being sent out to the East, on the following account. For some reason or other Novakòvsky had fallen out with the *ispravnik*[1] of Minuisinsk. Another of the political exiles had occasion to apply to the *ispravnik* for something; the latter, mistaking him for Novakòvsky, received him with the grossest incivility, and when he discovered his error, apologised by explaining the mistake he had made. The thing was talked about, and came to the ears of Novakòvsky and of his wife, who had voluntarily followed him into banishment. For some days the exiles consulted together what should be done, but before they had decided to take any steps, Novakòvsky's wife took the matter into her own hands; she went into the office and gave the *ispravnik* a box on the ear, with the words—"That's for my husband!" She was had up for trial, and sentenced by the court to deportation into Eastern Siberia, whither her husband was now accompanying her by his own desire.

Later I learned to know and esteem Novakòvsky's wife. She was a clever, courageous woman, of lively and resolute disposition. I believe that both she and her husband died in Siberia.

Our journey now proceeded much as heretofore, only in course of time the regulations were less and less strictly observed. We left off our fetters altogether, without any comment being made, and were never bothered about head-shaving.

I looked forward with impatience to arriving at Irkutsk prison, where I hoped to meet a friend of early days—Maria Kovalèvskaya. We had become acquainted in 1875,

[1] Head of the district police.

belonged to the same section of the Buntari, and—as was then customary among all the revolutionists—said "thee" and "thou" to one another. Maria Kovalèvskaya[1] was one of the most remarkable women in the movement; she was the daughter of a man of property named Vorontsov, and had married Kovalèvsky, a tutor in a military gymnasium. In the early sixties she joined the revolutionary movement, left her husband and little daughter, and devoted herself to the work of the party. She was small of stature and had something of the gipsy in her looks; was lively and energetic in manner, keen of wit, ready and logical in speech. She distinguished herself at all theoretical discussions, always penetrating to the kernel of the question in hand, and bringing life and point into the debate, without ever becoming personal or hurting anyone's feelings. She was esteemed very highly; and people who were quite opposed to the Socialists fully appreciated her exceptional gifts. In any other country she would have played a distinguished part; in Russia she was condemned to fourteen years and ten months' penal servitude, because she was found in a house where some revolutionists made armed resistance to the gendarmerie.[2] By her courageous bearing during trial and in prison, as also later in Kara, Maria Kovalèvskaya became one of the best-known characters in revolutionary circles. In the prison, where she was witness of the shameless unfairness and bad faith of officials at every turn, her irrepressible energy found vent in upholding and defending the prisoners. Whether the matter were really serious, or a comparative trifle, whether the offence was committed by a functionary of high position or by the meanest underling, her determination knew no compromise; she made her protest regardless of consequence to herself, would not rest till she

[1] See portrait, p. 266.

[2] In this trial, of February, 1879, when the defendants were convicted of resisting arrest with arms in their hands, two men—Antònov and Brantner—were executed, the other ten condemned to long terms of penal servitude.

had gained her end, and would rather have died than have given in. She always stood firmly for the tactics of the Buntari, *i.e.* to use the strongest and most radical measures for enforcing a protest against official oppression. If there were any discussion on this head her advice was always to annoy the staff actively, to break windows, furniture, etc. It was only her strong sense of comradeship that could induce her to bow to the will of the majority and adopt more passive means, such as hunger-strikes or boycotting officials. She had fought out a whole series of such conflicts, and one of them—a dispute at Kara—had led to her being removed, with three female comrades, to Irkutsk. No sooner, however, were they there than a contest arose with the head of the police; and the four women in consequence refused food, fasting so long (ten or eleven days, I believe,) that the prison doctor became apprehensive of the result, and the pressure of public opinion being brought to bear on the governor of the district, he granted the requests of the women "politicals."

At last, towards the middle of September, we arrived at Irkutsk, the capital of Siberia, and were taken to the local prison—celebrated like that of Kiëv for many escapes of political prisoners.[1]

[1] In February, 1880, eight "politicals" condemned to penal servitude escaped from Irkutsk prison by breaking through the walls: Berezniàk (known also by the name of Tìshtchenko), Volòshenko, Ivàntchenko, Alexander Kalyùshny, Nicholas Posen, Popko, Fomitchòv, and Yatsèvitch. They were all recaptured and their sentences increased, Berezniàk and Fomitchòv being chained to the wheelbarrow.

Another escape was that of two women, Sophia Bogomòletz and Elizabeth Kovàlskaya, and they also were both recaptured after four weeks, but E. Kovàlskaya again escaped and was again recaptured. There were executed in this prison: Lyòchky, for unintentionally killing a warder, and Nyèüstroyev, a teacher in a gymnasium, for striking the Governor-General Anùtchin when the latter was visiting the prison. Shtchedrin, sentenced to life-long penal servitude, was condemned to death for striking the governor's adjutant, but his sentence was reduced, and he was chained to the wheelbarrow. Later Shtchedrin was sent to Schlüsselburg, still chained to the barrow, and there he went mad and died.

We men were given a room in common, and the ladies were shown to another. The moment we were shut in I flew to the window, climbed up, and called the name of Maria Kovalèvskaya, for we had soon found out that her cell was over ours. She answered at once, and we talked together far into the night. In our walks we had subsequently many opportunities of meeting during our eight days' stay here. The long years of separation had in no way impaired our intimacy. On the contrary, from the first moment of meeting, our mutual sympathy found expression without the need of many words, and we understood each other as old friends do. The sufferings she had undergone moved me to the deepest compassion. The hunger-strike of which I have spoken had taken place only a short time before our advent, and she bore terrible traces of its effect, looking as if but newly risen from the grave, though her spirit was unbroken. It was still the same enthusiastic, untameable, combative nature I had known so well. Even the officials could not withstand the fascination of her personality, but yielded respect to her strong sense of right and her inflexibility of purpose, as I soon observed. We had each, naturally, much to relate; and I marvelled that she could have retained such elasticity of mind, that the range of her quick intellect should have in no wise contracted, that despite all she had gone through she could laugh and jest as ever. Everything that was going on in the distant lands of freedom interested her keenly; she never wearied of questioning me about the state of public life in Western Europe and in Russia, and she soon managed to find out in what each of us could best instruct her. I, for instance, spent two or three evenings in describing to her the working-men's organisations in Western Europe, and giving her my own impressions of life abroad. It was characteristic of her that she was able to appreciate the peculiar social conditions of other countries, although there was so much that was unsympathetic to her as a Russian. She was

especially indignant about my treatment in German prisons.

In her own views she still adhered to the policy of the Buntari, and this could hardly have been otherwise. Her past life entirely belonged to the period when their views and those of the Naròdniki governed the whole revolutionary movement, and there could be no question of criticism. The simple programme of "stirring up the people to uprisings and rebellions against the existing régime, in accordance with varying local circumstances," was in consonance with her fiery temperament, impatient of all restraint.

Her three friends were also interesting characters, and I soon had opportunities of talking to them and hearing the story of their connection with the movement. First came the young Sophia Bogomòletz;[1] her maiden name had been Prìsyetskaya, and she was the daughter of a rich landed proprietor in the government of Poltava. She had attended a higher grade school for girls, and later the medical course in Petersburg; had married a physician, and then—like Maria Kovalèvskaya—had left her husband and child to devote herself entirely to revolutionary work. In 1880 she was arrested as a member of the South Russian Workmen's Union and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude. She attempted to escape,[2] but was recaptured, and was then given five years more, which was again increased by a year in consequence of a dispute with an official. Besides this she was placed in the category of "on probation" prisoners, which means, as I shall explain later,[3] that the term of actual confinement in prison is lengthened. She, too, was by nature an advocate of revolt, and throughout her imprisonment kept up a constant feud with the officials. She went even farther than her friend Kovalèvskaya, for while the latter only fought against injustice and tyranny, Sophia Bogomòletz looked on all prison officials as her natural enemies, and

[1] See portrait, p. 266. [2] See note, p. 189. [3] See p. 236.

held even the smallest compromises, such as most prisoners are obliged more or less to give in to, as unprincipled and inadmissible; for example, she looked upon the medical examination of prisoners as a personal insult. She was influenced by no considerations of health, and was always prepared to risk her own life, if she judged there was any reason for doing so. The staff simply trembled before her, for they knew that their only means of extorting submission—the fear of punishment—was here of no avail.

The story of the third member of this little band was as follows. In the spring of 1879 the sum of 1,500,000 roubles was stolen from the offices of the Finance Department in Kherson, the depredators having broken in through the wall of the adjoining house. On the same day the police arrested a woman driving through the town in a country cart with some suspicious-looking sacks. The woman was identified as Elena Ròssikova, wife of a landed proprietor in the neighbourhood, and the sacks contained a million roubles. With her another lady was also arrested; and in consequence of the latter's confession the rest of the money was found, with the exception of some 10,000 roubles. It turned out that this wild undertaking had been organised by Elena Ròssikova, who had planned to rob the imperial purse, with the intention of applying the money to revolutionary purposes. She and some other persons implicated were tried before a court-martial, and she, as the ringleader, was sentenced to penal servitude for life. She, too, waged unceasing war against the whole staff of the prison, and was daunted by nothing when a "protest" was in question.

The fourth of these women "politicals" was Maria Kutitònskaya. She had been a pupil in a girls' school in Odessa, and while still very young had joined the revolutionists. In 1879 she was arrested as a comrade of Lisogùb[1] and Tchubàrov, was condemned to four years'

[1] This revolutionist was very rich; but lived in extreme poverty, that he might devote all his fortune to the cause. He was condemned to death in

penal servitude, and sent to Kara. At the expiration of her sentence she was interned in the town of Aksha in Transbaikalia; but she was soon back in prison. The authorities had ill-treated the male prisoners in Kara (as to which I shall speak later); and Kutitònskaya resolved to take vengeance on the chief offender in the matter, the governor of the province, Ilyashèvitch by name. She fired a pistol at him, but missed. The court-martial condemned her to death, but this was altered to lifelong penal servitude.

Beautiful and distinguished-looking, with fair hair, and gentle, winning manners, Maria Kutitònskaya won hearts by the score. While she was under trial for the attempted assassination of the Siberian potentate she was subjected to the most cruel and inhuman treatment; thrown into a damp, gloomy dungeon, and allowed only bread and water. Help came to her from the ordinary convicts, who had seen her in the prison, and worshipped her; they brought her food at great risk to themselves, and did her various other services. These criminals had changed her name a little to suit themselves, and always called her "Cupidonskaya"; having thus unconsciously hit on a charming pet-name for the beautiful woman. But for their assistance she might not have survived her treatment at that time; as it was, her long imprisonment undermined her health, and she became a victim of lung trouble, to which she succumbed in 1887.

1879 solely for that reason, as he had carefully abstained—contrary to his own most ardent inclinations—from giving any active help in the movement for fear of compromising himself and thus forfeiting the wealth which was practically supporting the party. See Stepniak's *Underground Russia*.—*Trans.*

CHAPTER XXI

THE CHIEF OF POLICE AT IRKUTSK—MEETING WITH EXILED COMRADES — FROM IRKUTSK TO KARA — STOLEN FETTERS—A DUBIOUS KIND OF DECABRIST —ANOTHER CONTEST—ARRIVAL AT OUR JOURNEY'S END

THE detailed narrative of all that these women had gone through impressed us greatly; for their sufferings had been severe, and often caused by the most paltry tyranny. The wonder was that they had ever been able to hold out. Our indignation against the chief of police, under whose auspices this sort of thing had gone on, was naturally roused to such a pitch that we longed for an opportunity to testify our abhorrence of his conduct. This opportunity was soon forthcoming. A higher official from Petersburg, who was inspecting Siberian prisons, came one day with his suite into our cells, and the chief of police was in attendance. The moment he entered, Làzarev, our head-man, went up to him, (in accordance with a predetermined agreement of our party,) and said in loud and distinct tones—

"We are astonished at your impudence in daring to appear before our eyes, after having by your treatment forced our women comrades into a terrible hunger-strike."

The whole company of our visitors hastily took their departure, to the tune of our comments and ejaculations, which contained nothing flattering to the evildoer! No

untoward results followed our action, and the ladies heartily rejoiced at this humiliation of their torturer.

From these four we heard much about the conditions of life in Kara, our appointed destination; as also from another comrade now in Irkutsk, who could give us his personal experience of the prison there. This was Ferdinand Lustig—formerly an artillery officer, and afterwards a student at the Petersburg Technological Institute—who had been sentenced in 1882, in the case of Suhanov and Mihaïlov, to four years' penal servitude. He had now ended his term in Kara, and was going to be interned elsewhere, under police supervision. What he told us was not comforting: the régime was severe, and the governor of the political prison—a captain of gendarmerie, named Nikolin—of the worst repute.

Four of us only were to travel eastward together: Maria Kalyùshnaya, Tchuikòv, Làzarev, and myself. The other seven were to be sent to various places in the government of Irkutsk; and the nineteen-year-old Rubinok, whose sad case I have already described, was to go northward to the deserts of Yakutsk.

At the end of September we started, in company with a party of ordinary prisoners. We had now before us a journey of some twelve hundred versts (eight hundred miles), which would take at least two months. Winter in Siberia begins much earlier than in other places of the same latitude, even in European Russia, and therefore we had to expect many hardships. In two days the last steamboat was to start for Listvinitchnaya, across Lake Baikal, and if we missed that we should have to winter in Irkutsk.

The tempestuous Baikal treated us kindly on the whole, though usually the autumnal storms are a real danger to voyagers on its waters. It is often asserted that the scenery of its shores rivals that of the Swiss mountain lakes; and without myself instituting any comparison,

I can vouch for it that the impression those magnificent hills made on me was unforgettable.

We had to pass a night at the landing-station on the opposite shore—Mysovaya; and we had been already shut into our prison, when the grating of the lock again sounded, and the warder brought in a young lady, who came straight towards me.

"Sonia!" I cried, in joyful surprise, as I recognised in her Sophia Ivànova, a dear friend whom I had not seen for six years. Like Sophia Perovskaya, Vera Figner, and other prominent women of the terrorist organisation, she had joined the new party of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya* in the autumn of 1879, when the society of *Zemlyà i Vòlya* (Land and Liberty) was dissolved. It was just during that transition period that I became acquainted with her and with other Terrorists; and shortly after, in January, 1880, she was arrested in Petersburg, where she had been assisting at the secret printing-press whence issued the organ of the party, named like it, *Naròdnaia Vòlya* (The People's Will). At the time of the arrest an armed resistance was made, in which Sophia Ivànova took an active part, for which she was condemned to four years' "katorga."[1] This sentence having been fulfilled, she was now being sent for internment into the government of Irkutsk.

We were both heartily rejoiced at seeing one another again, but our meeting could be only a brief one; the steamboat was to start almost directly on its return journey, and Sonia could not miss it. We hurriedly exchanged news of ourselves and of our common friends; then came our parting, and I have never seen her since. To the best of my knowledge she is still living in Siberia.

Soon after this we arrived at Verkhny-Udinsk, where—as in most Siberian towns—the prison was filled to overflowing, and no room could be found for us "politicals."

[1] *i.e.* penal servitude.—*Trans.*

The sergeant (in Transbaikalia the convoys of prisoners are always commanded by a sergeant, instead of by a commissioned officer, as on the previous part of the journey) took us on to the police-station. As, however, it was late the place was all deserted, and no official could be found, which disturbed the sergeant no whit; he simply left us there by ourselves in the office, with unbolted windows and doors, and went his way. We also were free to go or stay as we pleased, and were rather surprised at his calm way of solving the difficulty. But the man knew what he was about. It was true enough that we could walk off without anyone being the wiser; but what then? It was, indeed, always easy to escape from prison here; but it was well-nigh impossible to get any further. Elizabeth Kovàlskaya had twice escaped from prison in Irkutsk (once disguised as a warder), but on both occasions she was caught before she had left the town; and if she had found concealment impossible in a relatively big place like Irkutsk, with all the allies and money she had at command, the case must certainly have been hopeless for us, strangers, in a little hole like Verkhny-Udinsk. Still, it was a curious feeling at the time, as I well remember, to know oneself free and under no kind of observation, and yet to be so helpless. We finished by waxing restive and miserable over the trap we were in.

In this place we met another comrade on his way from Kara, going off to be interned elsewhere. This was Steblin-Kamensky,[1] whom his wife voluntarily accompanied. They had been too late for the steamer, and were now obliged to wait in Verkhny-Udinsk till the way again became open—three or four months probably. During that time he was at liberty to go about in the place as he pleased, and naturally we spent together the two days of

[1] In 1879 he had been condemned, at the same time as Maria Kovalèvskaya, to ten years' "katorga," for armed resistance to the police. He afterwards committed suicide in Irkutsk.

our sojourn here, Kamensky telling us all he could of life in Kara. He was a brilliant talker, and described with an inexhaustible flow of humour the doings of our comrades in every particular. True, our laughter over his stories was mingled with much sorrow and indignation, for what he related was often sad enough. He told us of the bitter hardships inflicted on our comrades by an inhuman gaoler, and he described Captain Nikolin, in command over the penal settlement for "politicals" at Kara, as a malicious, ill-natured man, continually devising petty humiliations for the prisoners.

These various comrades, from whose personal knowledges we had information about Kara, all made the same impression upon us. They bore the stamp of their long imprisonment; their voices were muffled in tone; anxiety, deep and constant, was painted on their faces; the hair of nearly all, despite their youth—hardly any had reached thirty—was prematurely grey. But discouraged and broken-spirited they were *not;* or at least with one or two exceptions only. Very few of them could regard the future with any hopeful feelings for themselves personally. Long years of exile lay before them, doomed as they were to vegetate in some forsaken corner of Siberia, victims to all sorts of hardships, far from friends and civilisation. To many it seemed questionable whether their future lot might not be more dreary than prison life itself. Yet even the semblance of freedom attracted them—a doubtful freedom certainly, for the exiles, or "colonists" as they are called, are subject to a thousand and one restrictions at every turn.

I met one only who looked forward with a steadfast confidence in the bright side of things, and this notwithstanding the fact that he was bound for the worst part of Siberia—the government of Yakutsk. Ivan Kashintsev[1]

[1] He was sentenced to ten years' "katorga" in 1881 for taking part in the South Russian Workmen's Union, and in consequence of the Coronation manifesto a third of this sentence was remitted.

was then only twenty-five, and full of youth and high spirits; he declared to me, on the occasion of our meeting at one of the halting-stations (we already knew each other), that he meant to escape at all hazards. This, in fact, he accomplished later, and he is now living abroad.

Before those who were released from prison, to live in exile under police supervision, reached their appointed destinations, they had at that time many difficulties and delays to encounter. We ourselves went at a snail's pace on our way to Kara, but prisoners coming thence progressed far more slowly. They had to wait at nearly every halting-station until some convoy on the homeward journey could pick them up and take them on for a certain part of the way, and sometimes they were kept in this manner nearly a week at a station. On an average they barely made five versts a day, and when the distance they had to travel was some hundreds or even thousands of versts, the journey might take months to perform.

At each meeting with comrades on the return journey from Kara, I could not help thinking of my own future, and saying to myself, "What will you feel like when after long years you tread this path again? Or, indeed, will you ever tread it?"

One day I found I had sustained an odd loss: someone had made off with a bag in which I kept some of my belongings, the chief item among them being my fetters! I had to make the somewhat curious confession to the commanding officer that, instead of wearing my chains, I had allowed them to be stolen; and I was rather surprised that, while commiserating me on account of my personal losses, he did not seem at all agitated about the loss of the Government's property.

"What am I to do without my fetters?" I asked him, when I saw that the absence of this important detail in the attire of a convict left him unmoved.

"Well, of course we must get some for you somehow," opined the officer. "Just wait a moment; there ought to be things of the kind lying about somewhere." And he gave the sergeant orders to look in the lumber-room, where a new pair of fetters was discovered.

"Take care you don't lose these!" said the officer, as I packed them among my luggage.

This is a specimen of the indulgent, almost fatherly demeanour which our guardians more and more assumed towards us as we got further east.

We were by this time in the thick of the Siberian winter and its severities. We had passed the Yablonovoi mountain ridges, and were nearing Tchita, the capital of Transbaikalia. At the last station before our arrival there we observed a great bustle going on among the ordinary prisoners; the sergeant and the soldiers were occupied with them all night, continually going in and out in a quite unusual manner. We racked our brains to imagine what could be on foot; but the riddle was only solved next day, as will be seen further.

Although the distance from Tchita was considerable for one day's march,—about forty versts (twenty-six miles), I think,—we started very late on the following morning; but after about twenty versts' march we came to a lonely farm-house, standing all by itself on the high-road. We had heard from our comrades who had been in Kara that an old man lived here who gave himself out as a Decabrist.[1]

Our party halted in the courtyard, we "politicals" were shown into a room, and the master of the house presently paid us a visit. He introduced himself by the name of Karovàiev; and was a vivacious old gentleman, of eminently respectable appearance. According to his account of himself he had been an ensign in the Guards, had taken part in the revolt of the Decabrists, and had been exiled to Siberia; he claimed to be eighty years of age, but did not

[1] The participators in the revolt of December, 1825, on the occasion of Nicholas I.'s accession, were so called,

look more than sixty-five. He made himself very agreeable, and was most anxious to show us hospitality, declining to take any money from us. Meanwhile in the next room and the corridor things were very lively; there seemed to be a sort of combined market and feast going on, soldiers and convicts eating, drinking, and hobnobbing together like boon companions.

It was already dark when we arrived at the gates of the prison in Tchita, where we had at once to engage in a struggle with the governor: first, because he received the ordinary prisoners first, leaving us to wait; and next, because he gave us a room which was absolutely unfit for us to spend the night in. Only after we had made a great fuss, and threatened him with complaints, did he give us proper accommodation.

Next day, when the party was mustered for departure, it became apparent that the ordinary prisoners had hardly any clothes! Their things had vanished, and they were literally half naked. A light was now cast on the events of the preceding night, when there had been such a carousal at the house of the Decabrist. That respectable and hospitable old gentleman was evidently in league with the escort, and had provided the convicts with vodka and other delicacies, in exchange for their clothing, which no doubt he had obtained at a bargain. That the transaction might not be discovered before our arrival in Tchita, the soldiers saw to it that it should be as late as possible before we got in, so that the inspection should be gone through hurriedly, and the absence of the clothes not perceived.

In short, the respectable Karovàiev had not established himself in that lonely spot for nothing. The jollification of the unlucky criminals had evil consequences for themselves. In proportion as their clothing and other State property were deficient they were treated to the soundest of thrashings; and only when that had been administered did they receive a fresh outfit.

In Tchita we had to part from our good *stàrosta* Làzarev, who was to be interned here. We three others determined to secure for ourselves a thorough rest in this place; for we had been six weeks on the march from Irkutsk, and were thoroughly tired out. We felt in no hurry to go on; a prison awaited us, while on the journey we had at least a certain amount of freedom and variety. Moreover, we knew that there were a number of our comrades interned at Tchita, and we should be able to see something of them; while apparently all intercourse with the outer world would cease for us after this stage, where we must make our last adieux before the prison doors closed on us. We therefore reported ourselves sick, and easily got the prison doctor's consent to our breaking the journey here; which meant that we should be picked up by the next convoy in about a fortnight's time. Our comrades paid us frequent visits; that is, they came to the prison gate when we were in the courtyard. The most interesting news they gave us concerned the travels of the American writer, George Kennan, who had just arrived in Tchita on his return journey from Kara; and our friends were full of praise for that excellent man.

During the last days of November we started again, this time in company with a so-called "family party" of ordinary prisoners—women and children as well as men going forward to prison and exile. There had not been much snow that winter, and instead of sledges two-wheeled carts were our means of transport, travelling in which was a positive martyrdom. The cold became more intense every day, and tried us severely, although we wore every warm garment we possessed, so that we moved with the greatest difficulty. The only way to keep warm was to march beside the carts, and one can imagine the sufferings of the unfortunate children who were accompanying their parents into this inhospitable desert. One longed for the next halting-station and for possibilities of warming oneself, which even there were not always all that could be

desired. The halting-stations had sometimes not been heated for a good while, and the ordinary prisoners had first to chop wood with their numb and frozen hands; even then there was not always sufficient fuel. The stoves, too, were often out of order, and smoked so badly that to stay in the room was a misery. It happened repeatedly that we three "politicals" were accommodated in a peasant's hut, and sometimes the whole party had to be quartered in like manner. We were always glad when this happened, for the wretchedest cabin seemed comfortable in comparison with even the best *étape*. How often we wished we could be by ourselves in a hut of this kind during the rest of our imprisonment!

I have said that relations between prisoners and escort were now very easy-going; strict discipline was no longer the watchword on either side. This had its disadvantages, the soldiers being often very rough with the ordinary prisoners. One day, as we were marching to Nertchinsk, I saw a soldier behaving very brutally to a poor feeble old convict, knocking him about with his rifle-butt for climbing on to one of the carts, and apparently only because the soldier had meant to ride on it himself. I intervened, and called to the sergeant in command that I should report him for not keeping his men in order. Next day, as we went through the town on our way to the prison, I stepped into a sausage shop to buy some provisions, when the soldier whose party I had left called after me, "Where are you going? What do you want?" I let him shout, and concluded my purchases. I then saw that the sergeant had driven on and disappeared, but I only thought that he had taken some short cut to the prison and would meet us there, and I was much surprised when the governor of the gaol received me with the information that the sergeant had reported me for insulting the guard and leaving the ranks without permission. I suppose he wished to forestall the com-

plaint I had threatened him with, about which I had quite forgotten, and I now turned the tables on him by making it in due form. The upshot was that the sergeant apologised to me in the presence of witnesses, and we were respectively pleased to withdraw our complaints!

At Nertchinsk, Tchuikòv and I were taken to the men's prison, and Maria Kalyùshnaya was given a separate cell. I shall never in my life forget the picture that prison presented. From the dimly-lighted corridor one could see into the various rooms, where the prisoners were already lying down, as it was late. Packed closely side by side they lay not only on the wooden bed-places (which were two wide shelves running along the walls one above the other), but all about the floor; there was literally not an inch of vacant space. Most of the men were clad in shirt and trousers, but many had only trousers on, and lay uncovered on the filthy floor. The throng was so dense, that in order to get to the "privileged" room we had actually to step on the bodies of the sleepers. The stench was pestilential, the wooden tubs filled with excrement were everywhere about, and as they were leaky their contents had been trodden over the whole floor. Although most of the men were asleep, here and there groups of excited card-players squatted on the floor or the bed-places, and throughout the whole place there was a deafening babel of sounds. The general effect was most gruesome, a circle of the Dantean Inferno was the only possible comparison.

The "privileged" room was also full of people, and we found there some comrades from Kara—Tchekondze and Zuckermann. They were lying close together on the crowded floor, and we with difficulty found a vacant spot, so that we could lie down near our friends. Zuckermann was known to me: he was a compositor, who in the middle of the sixties had trudged on foot from Berlin into Switzerland, where I subsequently had made his acquaintance. He had gone to Russia later, and had worked at

the secret printing-press of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*, where he was arrested at the same time as Sophia Ivànova. I had been told by comrades how heroically he had behaved during the trial. In order to shield the others he had taken all blame on his own shoulders, declared that it was he who had fired the first shot in resistance to the gendarmerie, and so on. He had been condemned to eight years' "katorga" and sent to Kara, where he had become the darling of the whole prison. Always sunny-tempered, full of wit and fun, he spread good humour everywhere; moreover, he was unselfishness personified, ever ready to help others at his own expense, one of those people who are called "too good for this world." Even as we lay on the floor in that horrible place he told stories and jested, drawing the most glowing imaginary pictures of his future life in Yakutsk, whither he was being sent for internment. The reality, unhappily, turned out widely different from his sanguine prophecies. Poor merry Zuckermann could not hold out against the hardships and loneliness of his place of exile, and he put an end to his own life.

Tchekondze I had not met before, but we had many common friends. He came from Gruzia, and had graduated in the Petersburg college for artillery officers. With other Caucasians he had then participated in the Propagandist movement, had been arrested in 1875, and sentenced in the "Trial of the fifty" to banishment; but he had escaped from Siberia, and had been recaptured and condemned to three years' penal servitude. He was now going into exile in Yakutsk. He impressed one as a strong-willed, careful, practical man, who would never be at a loss, but would find a sphere of usefulness under any circumstances; and so indeed he proved in his after life. The privations he suffered during long years of exile undermined his health, however. When sent to Western Siberia in the early nineties he fell seriously ill and died in Kurgan, on the threshold of Europe, in 1897.

At last, on the morning of December 24th, 1885, we arrived at Ust-Kara, a little village wherein is situated the prison for ordinary convicts and the prison for women "politicals." Here we had to part from Maria Kalyùshnaya, and I saw her that morning for the last time. Tchuikòv and I had fifteen versts more to travel to Nizhnaya Kara, where was the prison for male "politicals"; and we had to wait till next day for the commandant, who received in charge both ourselves and the ordinary criminals. Our luggage was put into a cart; and accompanied by a guard, we marched off, having previously donned our fetters in due form.

It was a frightfully cold day, and despite the chains and our heavy clothing, we stepped out briskly as though we were in a hurry to get under lock and key. We knew that this was our last tramp in the open, that for many long years there would be only a trot round the prison-yard for us, and our thoughts dwelt dismally on the prospect.

"There is your prison," said one of the soldiers, and pointed out, a little way ahead, a stockade made of tall posts set side by side.

Suddenly there appeared coming towards us a group of people—two women, a Cossack, and a man in civilian dress. "Victor!" I cried, recognising the latter as we approached nearer. It was my old friend Victor Kostyùrin, whom I had not seen for nine years.[1] He was now being removed from prison to his place of internment.

After hasty greetings he introduced me to the two ladies who accompanied him—Natalia Armfeld and Raissa Prybylyèva, both "colonists" in Kara. Kennan has given Natalia Armfeld's story in his book,[2] and I will only mention here that in 1879 she (with Maria Kovalèvskaya) was implicated in armed resistance to the gendarmerie,

[1] He had been sentenced in 1879 to ten years' "katorga," on account of the assault on Gorinòvitch (see page 11).

[2] *Siberia and the Exile System*, by George Kennan.

and sentenced to fourteen years and ten months' penal servitude. Raissa Prybylyèva had been a member of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*, and had been sentenced in 1883 to four years' "katorga."

Victor and I had, of course, much to say to each other, but our time was short, for our guards naturally did not see the fun of remaining longer than necessary in the freezing cold of the open field, and a few brief sentences were all we could exchange.

"A Frenchman would have had a lot to say about this," I said: "we two friends meeting on the threshold of a prison, one going in, the other coming out."

Another pressure of the hand, and we parted.[1]

"Shall we ever meet again?" I asked.

"Ah yes!" cried one of the ladies. "We shall all meet in Petersburg at the triumph of the Russian revolution."

For her, at least, that hope was vain. Natalia Armfeld died at Kara in 1887, and Raissa Prybylyèva (who married afterwards the exile Tiutchev) is also no longer among the living. Kostyùrin still lives in Tobolsk; but since that day our paths have never again crossed.

Tchuikòv and I were now taken to the guard-room, which was close to the prison. Our arrival was notified; and soon there appeared, accompanied by some of the gendarmes, the governor of the prison, an officer of Cossacks named Bolshakov, a man who had been described to us by our comrades as respectable and humane.

We and our luggage were carefully searched. Of our clothes only our warm under-garments were left in our possession; everything else was to be taken to the wardrobe-room, except certain articles which were reserved that

[1] Everyone will see the dramatic element in this situation if it is remembered that this friend had been tried and condemned on account of that attempt to kill the spy Gorinòvitch, in which Deutsch had been the chief actor; and that now the one had just finished his term of imprisonment, while the other was commencing his.—*Trans.*

Commandant Nikolin might decide whether we should be permitted to retain possession of them.

"You need not put the fetters on again," said the captain of the guard, Golubtsòv. "They are not necessary here."

It was evening before we were ready to be taken on by the gendarmes to the prison—the goal of my long wanderings. Since my arrest in Freiburg twenty-two months had elapsed; I had travelled about 12,000 versts (nearly 8,000 miles), and I had visited more than a hundred different prisons.

"Guard, there!" cried our escort. A bolt flew back with a crash, and we stepped across the threshold.

MARTINOVSKY

STARINKYEVITCH

SUNDELEVITCH

ZLATOPOLSKY

PRYBYLYEV

YEMELYANOV

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CHAPTER XXII

FIRST DAYS AT KARA—FRIENDS OLD AND NEW

WE entered a long, dimly-lighted corridor. Close to the door stood a man in convict dress beside a mighty chest. "Good day, Martinòvsky!" said I; for although I had never seen him before, I knew from our comrades' descriptions that he, being *stàrosta*, remained on duty from early morning till late evening by this big chest, which was the prisoners' larder. He looked a little surprised at the greeting, but on our announcing our names a pleasant smile lighted up his grave features, and he shook hands with us warmly.

"Deutsch goes to No. 2 and Tchuikòv to No. 4!" The gendarme's announcement interrupted us. A door was opened, and I stepped into my room. It was a large apartment; a long table and benches stood in the middle; round three walls ran the bed-shelves; there was a huge stove, and three great windows admitted plenty of light.

My new companions welcomed me warmly. There were fifteen men in the room, two of them—Sundelèvitch and Paul Orlov—being already known to me from of old. The first question to be settled was where my sleeping-place should be, and it was decided that I should lie next to Sundelèvitch, which meant that Starinkyèvitch, whose place this had been, must find room elsewhere. I found later that it was a great sacrifice this comrade had made for me, for Starinkyèvitch was thereby separated from his friend Martinòvsky. In a room where so many men lived constantly crowded together, the only possibility of close

intercourse and the sharing of intimate thoughts between two friends was when they lay side by side on the bed-shelf, and it was only subsequently that I found out what significance this had in our situation.

When we arrived, supper was already over, but we were given each a glass of tea with a tiny scrap of sugar, and a piece of black bread. I was overwhelmed with questions, and was made to tell all about my arrest, my adventures, and what was going on in Russia. We chattered, joked, and laughed as only the young can, for except Berezniàk and Dzvonkyèvitch, who were forty and forty-five respectively, we were all between the ages of twenty-four and thirty. I had an odd feeling, as if after a long absence I found myself once more in an intimate family circle. Time flew, and it was late at night before I lay down to sleep, spreading on the wooden boards of the bed-shelf a little mattress that I had brought with me. My journey from Moscow had lasted seven months; I was sick of moving about, and now experienced a real feeling of comfort at the idea of having come to anchor for years.

I had been rejoicing much beforehand at the prospect of meeting in Kara my old friend Jacob Stefanòvitch,[1]

[1] See portrait, p. 112. Stefanòvitch was one of the most prominent of the Terrorists, who, helped chiefly by Deutsch and Bohanòvsky, succeeded in instructing and organising several thousands of peasants, and was on the point of heading their insurrection when he was arrested in 1877. Stefanòvitch, Deutsch, and Bohanòvsky were imprisoned at Kiëv, and their escape thence has been related (note, p. 98). Stepniak describes Stefanòvitch (see *Underground Russia, Jacob Stefanovic*, and *Two Escapes*) as of very strong and original character, extremely reserved, speaking rarely, and, though a man of action, very cautious and practical. He was the son of a village priest, and kept up constant intercourse with his old father, even when it was most dangerous for him to do so, at a time when whole cities would be thrown into a ferment if his presence in them were suspected. His personal appearance Stepniak describes thus: "He was of middle height, and somewhat slender, hollow-chested, and with narrow shoulders. Physically, he must have been very weak. I never saw an uglier man. He had the face of a negro, or rather of a Tartar, prominent cheek-bones, a large mouth, and a flat nose. But it was an attractive ugliness. Intelligence shone forth from his grey eyes. His smile had something of the malign and of the subtly sportive, like the

from whom I had last parted four years ago, in Switzerland. He had then returned to Russia, had been arrested in February, 1882, convicted in the "Case of the Seventeen," and sentenced to eight years' "katorga." He had been two years in Kara before my arrival. As he was lodged in another room I could only pay him a flying visit that evening, for soon after our entrance the rounds were made and the doors all locked for the night. Next morning, as soon as the rounds had been made and the roll-call got over, I called to the gendarmes through the peephole in our door, and made them take me to No. 1 room, where Stefanòvitch was. During the daytime we were permitted to go from one room to another—a privilege obtained by the "politicals" only after a long, hard fight, although in the criminals' prison the doors of the rooms had never been kept locked by day.

In No. 1 there were also sixteen men, that being the complete number; and now that we had arrived every room was full. After greeting the comrades here and chatting with my friend, I visited all the other rooms. Of course, the advent of a new-comer is a great event in the prison, and is generally expected beforehand, for notwithstanding all official precaution, a good deal of intelligence from without finds its way through the walls. The arrival is awaited with the greatest impatience, as may be imagined; and for a few days the monotony of the life is enlivened by the new-comer's tidings of the world in general and of the revolutionary movement in particular.

Not only had I much to tell, but I was much interested in learning the views of my comrades, though all that I

character of the Ukrainian race to which he belongs. When he mentioned some clever trick played off upon the police he laughed most heartily, and showed his teeth, which were very fine and white as ivory. His entire countenance, with his wrinkled forehead and his cold, firm look, expressed a resolution and at the same time a self-command which nothing could disturb. I observed that in speaking he did not use the slightest gesture." Stefanòvitch has now (1903) been over twenty years in Siberia. It was expected that in May this year he would be liberated so far as to be permitted to reside in some outlying province of European Russia, but this hope has not been realised.—*Trans.*

heard was not entirely to my liking. I recollect a conversation I had with an old acquaintance, Volòshenko,[1] who passed for a very intelligent man. He had been arrested at Kiëv in 1879, and sentenced to ten years' penal servitude, afterwards increased by eleven years more in consequence of an attempted escape. When I spoke of the new tendencies in the Russian revolutionary movement, and mentioned that a Socialist group had been formed calling itself the "League for the Emancipation of Labour," and professing the Marxian views held by the German Social Democrats, Volòshenko seemed highly amused.

"Social Democrats in Russia! That's a comical idea! Who are these people?"

"You see one of them before you," I replied.

Volòshenko and many others in the room stared in blank astonishment. Had I announced myself a follower of the prophet Mahomet they could scarcely have been more surprised. The ideas of Karl Marx were at that time but little known in Russia. It was indeed thought one's duty to read the first volume of *Das Kapital*, which had appeared in a Russian translation, and it was usual to find educated people in European Russia recognising Marx's services to the science of political economy; but in Kara they had not progressed even so far. As to the philosophical basis of Marx's theory of Socialism practically nothing was known; nevertheless it was rejected, partly owing to the influence of Eugene Dühring, partly to that of the Russian author N. Mihailovsky, and finally on account of a *dictum* of so-called "sane common sense" that Marx's ideas were quite inapplicable to Russia. This last was Volòshenko's contention, fortified, however, by no personal knowledge of Marx's writings.

I was in a position to give more than verbal tidings of the new tendency. We had succeeded, despite all official scrutiny, in smuggling various prohibited writings into the prison, and among them the first publication of our group,

[1] See note, p. 189.

Plehànov's *Socialism and the Political Struggle.* For a long time no forbidden literature had penetrated to Kara; the excitement was great, and the new material for thought was seized on with avidity. I was very anxious to discover Sundelèvitch's attitude towards this problem, for in the old days, when we were nearly all Terrorists, he was considered as more or less of a Social Democrat—at any rate, he had been known to approve of the German development on those lines, so far as that country was concerned. We had been acquainted in 1878, when he had in charge the transport of forbidden literature for the *Zemlyà i Vòlya* (Land and Liberty) group; and he had made use of his special experience in such illegal traffic to get Stefanòvitch and myself safely across the frontier after our flight from Kiëv prison. At that time we had had many hot discussions with Sundelèvitch over the methods of conducting our struggle in Russia; for I was then a decided opponent of the Social Democrats, and as a Terrorist and "Naròdnik" (*i.e.* member of the party whose object it was to organise revolts among the peasants) held the peaceful tactics of German Socialists to be utterly ineffectual—naturally, therefore, I would have all the more scouted the idea of introducing them into Russia. Sundelèvitch, on the contrary, did not believe in "the People," and thought agitation among the Russian working-classes quite futile. In his opinion the first thing to do was to fight for political freedom; and then, as soon as that was obtained, to resort to the constitutional methods of the German Social-Democratic party. Consequently, he did not join the terrorist party till it began its political activity in 1878; and he was one of the first to enunciate the idea that its methods were only temporarily adopted because they offered the sole possible means in Russia of overthrowing the existing political order. He was one of the most energetic in organising terrorist conspiracies, and the party owed much to his help in carrying through their active work; he was invaluable in striking out the most

effective and practical suggestions. He was arrested quite by chance in a public library in Petersburg during the autumn of 1879, and was prosecuted in the "Case of the Sixteen," when Kviatkòvsky and Pressnyàkov were sentenced to death, and he himself to lifelong penal servitude.

I had been thinking much about our former arguments, for I had since been converted to the views Sundelèvitch then advocated, and I now hoped to find a kindred spirit in him. Even on purely personal grounds I desired it; for when a man is convinced of the rightness of his own plan of action, it must be irksome to live for years with others who, while sharing his principles, differ entirely as to the best means of carrying them out; and this is especially so when what one holds most sacred is in question, no matter how tolerant one may be. I earnestly hoped I should not be alone in my views, and I could have asked for no better friend than Sundelèvitch, who was incomparable as a comrade—one of the finest natures I have ever known, unselfish, trustworthy, judicious.

As I now lay beside him during the long evenings we talked of our common friends still in freedom and fighting for the cause, of the victims of that fight who had died the death of heroes or were languishing in Schlüsselburg; but instinctively I shrank at first from touching on theoretical subjects, dreading that we might be out of sympathy, for I soon heard that he was no longer of his old way of thinking. Like many others during their first years of imprisonment, Sundelèvitch experienced a reaction; he absolutely threw over the Marxian doctrine, and would not admit the economic teaching of *Das Kapital* to be sound. In time we fought many a tough battle on this head, my friend declaring that for Germans Social Democracy might do, but that such ideas would never effect anything in Russia.

With my other friend, Stefanòvitch, I had less opportunity for conversation, as we inhabited different rooms;

but to him also my opinions came unexpectedly, and seemed strange and incomprehensible. When we had parted four years back we had been quite at one, and he had remained, as he was then, half Naròdnik, half Terrorist; while I, having thoroughly assimilated the new ideas, had, with some other companions, founded the Social Democratic organisation, *Tchòrny Peredyèl* (Redivision of the Land). He learned this now for the first time, and could not tell off-hand how he should regard it; but being unusually thoughtful and far-seeing, he appreciated the importance of the change that had come over the opinions of his comrades in the struggle. He grasped the trend of the new doctrine, and tried to comprehend it fully. It was clear to him that through our organisation a way was being laid in Russia for a perfectly new outlook on the world; he doubted whether it would find favour in our country, but was far from meeting the idea with enmity or contempt, as the shallower minds among the revolutionists did both then and later.

This common life of so many young people in the prison had led to the development of a peculiar jargon. Each room had its nickname: the first was "the Sanhedrin," the second "the nobles' room," the third "Yakutsk," and the fourth "Volost," *i.e.* "the commune." These names had their origin in the dim and distant past, and I never discovered what had given rise to them.

The inmates of the "nobles' room," in which I was located, were all clever, well-educated young men, full of life and vigour; each in a way represented a different type, and some had a really remarkable force of character. Among these latter I would especially class Nicholas Yatzèvitch, who was the son of a priest in Poltava. When a seventeen-year-old student in the Veterinary College at Kharkov he was arrested for attempting to rescue Alexei Medvediev[1] from prison, was tried, and sentenced to fiftèen years' "katorga." He had escaped

[1] See chap. xxv. p. 262.

(as I have said before) from the Irkutsk prison, had been recaptured, and condemned to another fc ırteen years' penal servitude. He was barely nineteen when brought to Kara, where he gained the goodwill of everyone by his admirable qualities. Modest even to bashfulness, silent and reserved, he yet exercised over his companions a quite wonderful influence. His thirst for knowledge was without limit; he studied various subjects with unflagging industry while in prison, especially natural science, philosophy, and literature, besides learning several languages. He found time, too, for manual work, at which he proved himself very quick and adroit. He was on friendly terms with every one of his comrades in prison without exception, always affectionate and ready to help. No wonder he gained the esteem of all, and was willingly looked up to as an authority, despite his youth (he was but five-and-twenty when I first went to Kara); whether the question were one of household affairs or an abstruse theoretical problem, his opinion was sure to find favour with the majority. The bent of his mind was towards metaphysics, and in philosophy as well as social science he gave himself out as an eclectic; he shared the opinions of Dühring and the Neo-Kantians, and in political economy was a follower of Carey, Bastian, and similar bourgeois theorists. Of course, therefore, he counted among the opponents of Marxism.

Of very different character were the two bosom friends Martinòvsky and Starinkyèvitch, usually called "the two Vanitchki," though really only one of them answered to the name of Ivan. Starinkyèvitch was another favourite of our little society, invariably good-tempered and full of fun. His jokes, *bon-mots*, and nonsense would often send us all into fits of laughter, when his own hearty ringing laugh was sure to dominate all the others. He too was talented, but not steady and persevering like Yatzèvitch. He was one of those fortunate beings who are able to get the gist of a passage with one rapid

glance; but he squandered his gifts, attempting everything, and doing nothing thoroughly. He was almost girlishly tender, clinging, and confiding by nature; but could on occasion become passionate and violent. Moscow was his birthplace, and he was sent straight from the University in 1881, when a mere boyish student, to twenty years' imprisonment, simply because he refused to say from whom he had received a manifesto that was found in his possession. He was an enthusiastic member of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya.*

They say that two friends are generally of opposite temperaments, and the two Vanitchki certainly bore out that theory. While Starinkyèvitch was gay and light-hearted, Martinòvsky was grave, sedate, almost morose. He seldom smiled, and I can never remember hearing him laugh. He was a man of iron will, commanding and even despotic in character. I cannot imagine his ever being brought to yield a hair's-breadth on any subject; on the contrary, he seemed always to contrive to bring others round to the fulfilment of his wishes. He was without doubt an extremely gifted and capable man, who might have made his mark as a leader in public affairs if he had had the chance. He was above all things practical; yet could immerse himself on occasion in theoretical problems, and was one of the first in the prison to take up the study of Marxism. He too came from Moscow, and like his friend Starinkyèvitch, had been condemned to twenty years' imprisonment. Martinòvsky had been sentenced, in the same case as Sundelèvitch, Kviatkòvsky, and others, to fourteen years' "katorga," and an attempted escape brought him an addition of another six years. His having been chosen *stàrosta* (head-man) by his comrades proves the complete trust they placed in him, and he was in every way a model representative of our interests.

The following story concerns another of my fellow-prisoners at Kara. On the 25th December, 1879, General Drenteln was driving in his carriage through the streets

of Petersburg. He had just been appointed chief of gendarmerie, in succession to General Mezentzev, (killed by the revolutionists; see pp. 92 and 263,) and was also the head of the notorious "third section."[1] Suddenly a man riding a beautiful thorough-bred stopped the carriage and fired several shots at the General through the window, none of the bullets hitting their mark. The rider made off, the General cried to the coachman to follow him, and a wild chase began. The people in the streets understood nothing about what had occurred, and saw with amazement this strange race between the General's carriage and a magnificently mounted horseman. More than once the latter seemed on the point of being brought to bay, but always escaped down some side street, closely followed by the General's fast trotters. At last the rider made a dash, left his pursuers behind, and was in hot flight, when his horse stumbled and fell. The fugitive did not lose his presence of mind, however; beckoning to a policeman, he said: "My good man, this horse is hurt; just look after it for me while I go and fetch the groom." The policeman obediently took the bridle, and the horseman vanished round the corner, cut through a passage, called a droschky, and was seen no more. General Drenteln foamed with rage when he found the horse in such safe keeping, but the rider gone. The police were set to work, and easily discovered the steed to be a racehorse named "Lady," which had been hired from a riding-school by a student named Mirsky,[2] already under police observation. Mirsky was by this time no longer to be found in Petersburg; he had escaped to South Russia. Several months later, however, he met his fate at Taganrock, while under the roof of a friend and comrade named Tarhov, a lieutenant in the artillery. Another officer, having suspicions about Tarhov's guest, put the police on the scent, and the house was sur-

[1] The secret police, which was then under the chief of gendarmerie, though it has since been constituted a separate department, controlling vast sums of money.

[2] See portrait, p. 112.

rounded. Mirsky, unwilling to surrender without a struggle, fired several revolver-shots at the police, and tried to break through their cordon. He was overpowered, however; was made prisoner, and in 1880 was brought before a court-martial, together with Tarhov, the poet A. Olchin, and some others. That was a time when even people not actually implicated in terrorist attempts were condemned to death off-hand by the courts-martial, and no one doubted that Mirsky—whose assault upon the chief of gendarmerie was undisputed—would be executed. Only he himself seemed to think otherwise. I remember how, shortly before the trial, somebody who had visited him in prison came to us and said that Mirsky wanted us to send him black clothes and a white tie, to wear when he went before the court. We were all very much surprised, and laughed rather mournfully over his odd whim. It was the first time it had occurred to any revolutionist to trouble himself about what sort of coat he should put on to face his judges. But of course we provided him with the means of shining for the last time in public; the papers remarked that "the chief defendant presented a very gentlemanly appearance," and his speech of defence was reported with approval in various foreign journals. He was condemned to death; and although this sentence was commuted to one of penal servitude for life, he very narrowly escaped suffering the full rigour of the law. Had the attempt—planned for that very day—to kill Alexander II. at the station in Alexandrovskaia been successful, or had the trial taken place two days later, after the 19th November, when the Tsar's train was blown up at Moscow,—all would have been over for Mirsky. As it was, however, he escaped with his life, and was confined in the famous Alexei-Ravelin tower of the Fortress of Peter and Paul, where at that time the most important "politicals" were imprisoned. Four years later he was brought to Kara, and he was one of my companions in the "nobles' room."

Instead of a slender, aristocratic youth, as Mirsky was

described at the time of his trial, I knew him as a robust, somewhat undersized but well-built man, of about twenty-seven. And he had changed in more than outward appearance; he was no longer the hot-headed boy, ready for any rash deed, but a serious man who had been through much and had thought deeply. Keen-witted and well educated, he had formed his own conclusions as to social conditions in Russia and their development in the future. The teaching of Marx was unknown to him, but he had attained a similar standpoint by following out his own reasoning. He was particularly sceptical concerning the views then prevalent among Russian revolutionists, according to which a purely Russian programme should be based on the organisation of the *artèls* (workmen's unions), and on the already existing system of the joint ownership of land by the village communes; a programme which must differ essentially from that of Socialists in all other civilised countries. He did not believe that anything further could be built on these remnants of patriarchal institutions. He was of opinion that the complete overthrow of the existing political régime was the first thing to be aimed at in Russia, but he was convinced that terrorist tactics would never entirely bring this about; and he expected equally little from any uprising of the working classes, since the mass of the people were sunk in apathetic resignation and hopelessness. Yet still the question tortured him—how should this task be approached?—and he was of all the prisoners in Kara the best prepared for the philosophical arguments of a Marxist.

Mirsky had been a medical student; but during his imprisonment he took up the study of jurisprudence, and was credited with such a thorough knowledge of legal affairs that his judgments were more trusted than those of some graduate lawyers who were among us. Mirsky was of Polish extraction; but having been brought up in Russia he was in every respect a thoroughly Russian Socialist.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE ORGANISATION OF OUR COMMON LIFE—THE "SIRIUSES"—WAGERS

ON my arrival at the Kara prison I found in existence there an extremely elaborate organisation regulating the prisoners' daily life, a system that the course of time had evolved and tested. The fundamental principle of the arrangement was equality of rights and duties; the inmates of the prison forming for all domestic purposes a commune or *artèl*, although the needs and wishes of individuals were taken into account as far as possible. It was free to anyone to enter this *artèl* or to remain outside, and whichever they did, material conditions—in the way of food, etc.—were the same for all.[1] The Government provided a certain quantity of food per day for each prisoner—about 3¼ lbs. of bread, nearly 6 oz. of meat, a few ounces of meal, and some salt. Friends of prisoners were permitted to furnish them with the means of obtaining extra provisions, and some of us, though, indeed, only a few, received such contributions regularly, this money as well as the governmental allowances becoming the common property of the *artèl*. The money was distributed as follows: part was set aside to supplement the food-rations, especially for buying more meat (this was called in our lingo "provisioning the stock-pot"); another portion was reserved for what was called common expenses—assistance to those who were leaving the prison and going to their

[1] Those who did not join the *artèl* had, of course, no votes in any discussions or decisions of that body.

appointed place of exile, subscriptions to such newspapers as we were allowed, postage, etc.; and a third part was divided equally among all for pocket-money. This last was spent according to the fancy of each individual, usually on tea, tobacco, fish, butter, and such things as were considered "secondary necessaries," though sometimes these were sacrificed and the money saved up for months, or even for a year or more, in order to buy a book or some special luxury. Our funds were very scanty; during my whole time in Kara there was never more than three or four kopecks[1] per man per day for the "stock-pot," and the pocket-money for each never amounted to more than a rouble[2] a month, often much less. In consequence of the primitive means of transport everything imported into Siberia cost three times as much as in Europe—a pound of sugar, for instance, cost thirty-five to forty kopecks—and the prisoners had to deny themselves many of the smallest comforts of material existence. Most of us used only brick-tea, *i.e.* tea of the commonest kind, and drank it without sugar; others thought even that a luxury, and drank hot water; while those who used sugar had to make one lump do for the whole day—that is, for three meals.

Actual money was never given us, everything was on paper only. All remittances were received by the commandant, who kept us informed of the amount he had in hand. Then we would order various articles, which would be given to our *stàrosta* to keep in the common chest, and whenever he gave anything out he made an entry in his account-book. At the end of each month the accounts were made up, each man being told whether he had overdrawn his pocket-money and so must start the next month with a *minus* of so many kopecks, or whether he had saved and was credited with a *plus*. The former would try to make good their deficit during the

[1] A kopeck is about equal to one farthing.—*Trans.*
[2] A rouble is about equal to 2*s.* 1*d.*—*Trans.*

following month; but there were some who—with the best will in the world—could never make their expenditure and income balance, and were always in default, thus acquiring the nickname of "minuses," while the thrifty were called "pluses." No shame was attached to the being a "minus," though it was scarcely a title of honour, and no one cared for the position. The "minuses" always aspired to get straight at any rate at Christmas or Easter, when pocket-money was generally increased by an influx of gifts, but it sometimes occurred that someone found it impossible to get his head above water, and it was then the custom that at one of our festivals—at Christmas, or on the commemoration of some revolutionary red-letter day—the *stàrosta* or someone should suggest the "whitewashing" of the bankrupt by wiping off his debt to the *artèl*. This proposal was always accepted by the majority, only the "minus" himself protesting, or refusing to consent.

Every morning the *stàrosta* presented himself with his order-book at the doors of the different rooms, and asked what was wanted. One would order a "sou's" worth[1] of sugar, another a "brick" of tea, and so on. These orders were entered, to be later transferred to the account-book, and soon afterwards the *stàrosta* would bring the articles and give them to us through the peephole. The *stàrosta* also received from the steward for distribution all things that were due to us in the way of clothing, linen, and so forth, and he was our representative in all our dealings with the commandant. The election of the *stàrosta* was by ballot, and for a term of six months. The person elected was, of course, free to decline the post, and this occasionally happened, as, though an honourable

[1] This simply meant a kopeck's worth; the expression had originated in the wish to disguise from the gendarme who was always on guard in the corridor the extremely small amount of such an order, but naturally in the course of time the gendarmes had come to understand our *argot* thoroughly, so that there was no longer any real deception.

office, it was one which entailed trouble and responsibility, and sometimes even a degree of unpleasantness.

Not only the *stàrosta*, but any member of the *artèl* might make proposals for changes in our arrangements, such proposals being written down, considered by the inmates of the different rooms, and then voted for or against in writing. It was the *stàrosta's* business to collect the votes and to announce the results through the peep-holes. Proposals of this kind were often most excitedly discussed, parties being formed to support or oppose them; and occasionally a subject would develop into a "cabinet crisis," though the moving or rejecting of votes of confidence in the "government" (for we had a whole ministry, other officers being necessary besides the *stàrosta*) was not customary.

All work within the prison precincts we shared among us; but such services as made it necessary to go outside the yard (carrying wood and water, sanitary cleansing, etc.) were performed by ordinary criminals, whom we tipped, although not in any way obliged to do so. Our own duties were of two kinds: work for the community—such as cooking, cleaning the rooms, attending to the steam baths; and private work—washing clothes, mending, etc. Everyone except the weak or ill had to take his share in the former. The cooking was undertaken by groups of five men, each group serving for a week at a time. There were eight or nine such groups in all, the choice of belonging to any particular group being left free without regard to rooms. Each group had its head cook, his assistant, a cook for the invalids, and two helpers. The work was not light, and was in no way attractive; it began between six and seven in the morning, and was not usually over before five in the evening, by which hour one would be thoroughly tired out; and when the end of the week came it was delightful to think of idling for a time. On the other hand, the labour was a welcome relief to the monotony of our lives, and the kitchen was a meeting-

place for the inhabitants of different rooms, forming a sort of clubhouse for those engaged in the cooking. Even when the work was hardest we had merry times there, discussing news, gossiping, and joking, the work itself often serving as a basis for fun and all sorts of nonsense. The head cook would give a raw hand some ridiculous job; one, for instance, would be set to pick potatoes out of the pot with a fork; another ordered to stand by a hole in the wall with a big stick and to knock on the head any blackbeetles that might make their appearance. I myself was given the task of chopping up millet-seed with a large knife, and other such absurdities would be invented.

Our cooks had to manage with very scanty materials. Vegetables frequently ran short, thus making it most difficult to vary the bill of fare. At the time of my arrival there were no potatoes to be had, and at midday, from motives of economy, only broth was provided, from which the meat had been taken to be served up separately for supper. When I sat down to dinner on my first day in Kara I was prepared for a frugal meal, having heard beforehand how poor the dietary was in this prison; but when I had spooned up the meagre soup without any accompaniment but bread and realised that this was my whole dinner, I felt somewhat downcast. I rose from table as hungry as I had sat down; and it was a long while before I could accustom myself to this sort of nourishment. Our culinary skill was chiefly displayed in the way of serving up the soup-meat at a subsequent meal. It was generally minced and heated up with some vegetables. The dish most favoured by the majority was meat cut into small pieces and mixed with groats; this was called "Everyone-likes-it," and it was the pride of the cooks to decorate our *menu* with this original name at least twice a week. The greedy ones among us used to spy around the kitchen, and never failed to spread the joyful tidings: "They're making 'Everyone-likes-it' to-day!" The cooks generally put their best foot forward on Saturday, when

their week of office expired. For years it had been the custom to have an extra dish on that day, a *pirògʹ* or sort of pie made of flour, rice, and mince. The cooks used to save up scraps of meat for it all through the week, and sometimes the *pirògʹ* would attain such dimensions that we could not dispose of it at one sitting, and a remainder would be left over for Sunday's breakfast. On the whole our food was insufficient, not very nutritious, and still less appetising. Bread only had we at discretion, as the rations given out by the steward were so large that some was always left over. Only those who had no stomach for a quantity of dry bread need go hungry. But we hardly ever had our fill except on great feast days, when not only was our pocket-money augmented, but an extra allowance of food was given. The cooks would then indulge us with various dainties and luxuries; roast meat would come to table, or cutlets, and white bread. Praise must not be denied to our cooks; there were among them *virtuosi*, whose handiwork was quite artistic—worthy, as we expressed it, "of better houses."

Invalid diet was not provided specially; the cooks had to arrange for that as best they could, and make it as varied as was compatible with economy. During my time there was no severe illness, and special diet was only needed for those who were delicate or who suffered from some chronic ailment. The question who was to be given invalid fare was decided by Prybylyev[1]—one of our number who acted as our medical adviser, and who showed much skill in that capacity, though at home he had only been a veterinary surgeon. His fame in the art of healing became widespread, and afterwards when he was living out of prison he was consulted by many people, though there were three qualified physicians in the neighbourhood.

The helpers in the kitchen generally either knew nothing whatever of the culinary art or else preferred rough work. I fulfilled both conditions, and never made anything of actual cooking; my duties consisted in carrying water,

[1] See portrait, p. 209.

chopping wood, taking water and charcoal for the samovar to the different rooms, apportioning the food in the wooden bowls out of which we ate, washing up, attending to the stoves, and cleaning the kitchen. Everybody working in the kitchen got rather larger portions of food than the others: that was an ancient custom.

Besides the head-man, who had charge of our larder, a special "bread-dispenser" was appointed, whose office it was to cut up the loaves and divide them among the different rooms; he had also to collect all scraps and crumbs that were left, and send them on to our comrades in the penal settlement,[1] where they were used to feed a horse and a couple of cows which belonged to the *artèl.*

The "poultry-keeper" was another of our officials. We kept in the yard a number of fowls which we cherished most carefully, and they were a great amusement to us, especially when a brood of chickens appeared or when the young cockerels showed fight.

Two other comrades were "bath-keepers"; had to see to the cleaning of the steam-bath, etc., and—like all our "officials"—were excused from kitchen work.

Finally, there was the very important post of librarian, which ranked next to that of *stàrosta*, and, like it, was decided by ballot, while the other dignitaries generally chose their own offices. In the course of years our library had attained quite imposing dimensions; it was composed partly of books brought by the inmates, partly of those sent to us as gifts. Nearly all branches of knowledge were represented in it, but particularly history, mathematics, and natural science; there were also books in almost every European language, including the classics. Two enormous cupboards in the corridor contained this treasure, but the greater part of it was usually in the hands of eager readers. The custodian had to look after the binding and mending

[1] This penal settlement was at a short distance from the prison, in the village of Kara, and here-as will be explained more fully later—the convicts, both ordinary and political, were allowed to reside under strict rules and surveillance after their term of actual imprisonment was over.—*Trans.*

of the books, in which he found many willing helpers. The tools and materials used were of the most primitive description; we had no pasteboard, for instance, and had to contrive some by pasting paper together. My travelling companion, Tchuikov, proved a first-rate librarian, not only invariably remembering what books each person had borrowed, but being always able to tell the whereabouts of any particular article or treatise in our files of newspapers. He was to the last always re-elected librarian.

Housework in the rooms was likewise done by strict rule; according to our turns we had to be on duty twice a day, seeing to the stoves, carrying the unsavoury wooden tubs in and out at night and in the morning, and so on. Our rooms were kept scrupulously clean and neat, and every fortnight there was a tremendous thorough cleaning; the boards were scrubbed with hot water, beds aired, tables and benches washed in the yard. We were very particular about proper ventilation, and observed all hygienic precautions most carefully; each man used the steam-bath once a week, and each washed his own clothes—not one of our easiest jobs.

Remembering that most of us were students fresh from the universities, or at any rate had hitherto had little practical acquaintance with domestic labour, and taking into account external circumstances generally and the scanty supply of materials, I think we might fairly pride ourselves on the practical and efficient organisation of our household affairs. Of course our system was liable to modification in details if necessary, but the principles on which it was based were fixed and unchangeable.

That our life must have had much in it irksome in the extreme and hard to bear is only too evident; living in such constant and close intimacy for years with the same set of people must necessarily lead to all kinds of petty rubs and differences; all the more because the forced inactivity was such a strain to the nerves of many. These were evils not in our power entirely to avert.

In the middle of each room hung a lamp with a dark shade—lamps that we had ourselves provided. Our table was narrow and long, so that a number of persons necessarily sat where the light was very poor, insufficient for work of any kind; and this, of course, was a misfortune for everyone, as those condemned to idleness disturbed the more advantageously placed who wanted to study. Even had there not been this drawback, serious concentration of mind would have been difficult in a small room wherein were congregated sixteen men of very different temperaments and inclinations. The needful quiet could rarely be obtained, for it would have been impossible to enforce silence during the long winter evenings; on the contrary, when one sat down to work at night tongues were loosened, and there began a constant hubbub of chatter and laughter. Anyone who was really bent on earnest study had to devise a special plan: he became what we called a "Sirius." This meant that as soon as it became dusk he went to bed till midnight, and then, while the rest were asleep, got up and worked till dawn, when Sirius rises above the horizon; after which he lay down for another two hours' rest. It needed an overwhelming desire for learning and considerable powers of endurance to become a "Sirius"; it was difficult to rest when the comrades were chattering and making a noise all around one, and when one had at last managed to get off to sleep, it seemed immediately time to wake up again. The dividing of the night's rest is not an easy thing to stand; in spite of my efforts I could never accustom myself to it; yet there were some among us—though not many—who were numbered among the "Siriuses" all the time I was at Kara. Yatzèvitch, and two others of whom I shall have more to say, Kalyushny and Adrian Mihailov, kept to this mode of life during that whole period.

I must mention one custom that had taken root in the prison, into which I was very soon initiated. We were

in the middle of a lively conversation one morning, just after my arrival, when M., one of the comrades, turned to me with the question—

"What do you say, Deutsch; will the Tsar soon be made an end of?"

"Oh no," I replied, "I don't think he'll be killed. The man will probably end his days peacefully in his bed."

My answer met with violent opposition, everyone assuring me that Alexander III. must meet his father's fate. At that time nearly all revolutionists had still a firm belief in the indestructible power of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*, and saw in terrorism the only practicable means of fighting Russian absolutism. To me, on the contrary, things showed themselves in quite a different light. I had taken part in the revolutionary organisation when the terrorist idea was in its infancy, had witnessed its development until finally it reigned alone and absorbed all the fighting energy of the party, had known personally Terrorists both great and small, and I had now come to the conclusion that the *Naròdnaia Vòlya* had outlived its time. The tide of feeling that had fostered the growth of this party had reached its height in 1881; while after, and in consequence of, the assassination of Alexander II. it had ebbed rapidly away. As I have explained before, all the leading Terrorists were then removed from the sphere of action, and the younger ones who tried to replace them had no chance of proving and tempering their own powers. Both in Russia and abroad I had seen how the earlier enthusiasm had given way to a fatal scepticism; men had lost faith, even though many would not have allowed that it was so. It was clear to me that a reaction had set in, to last for many years.

When I now gave expression to these views, M. asked suddenly—

"Will you back that opinion?"

"What does that mean?" I asked.

"Well, we simply mean by that, will you take a bet

on it? I declare that the Tsar will be killed; you maintain the contrary. I offer you a wager that the Tsar will be killed by the revolutionists within a certain time."

"Very well, I accept."

"Shall we say five years—till December 15th, 1890?"

"All right; what is the stake?"

This was not so easy to settle. Bets of this sort, I then learned, were quite the fashion, and were made on every kind of occasion—sometimes as the result of a serious argument, sometimes about a mere trifle; but there was rarely a controversy that did not terminate with the question, "Will you back that opinion?" If the other party tried to make excuses, there would be a chorus from the bystanders of "He shirks it!" and the reputation of a "shirker" was not a flattering one. The stake was usually some small matter, perhaps a little tea or tobacco, varying according to the importance of the subject in dispute. A "sou's worth" of sugar was a common offer; but if the loser undertook to brew tea for the whole room that was considered a high stake, and the result was awaited with interest. Although these bets were more or less of a joke, they had also a more serious side. There are people who will dispute about every imaginable thing, and make the wildest assertions simply for the sake of arguing; and it must be confessed that after such heedless talkers had lost a few wagers they were more inclined to hold their tongues occasionally, though neither the chance of losses nor of earning the nickname of "shirker" could quite restrain some of our number from arguing in the air.

My wager with M. was duly recorded, and it was agreed that the loser should provide cakes for all the inhabitants of the "nobles' room." This was a very high stake, costing several roubles, and the loser risked being without pocket-money for "secondary necessaries" during several months; but the question being one that might not be decided for a long while, the stake had to be considerable

to sustain interest. Time proved me right. At the end of 1890 M. had lost his bet, and wished to pay his debt of honour; but I refused to allow him to do so, on the ground that circumstances had changed, and the former inmates of the "nobles' room" would no longer be able to partake of the feast, many having by that time left the prison. M. would not hear of it at first, but ended by giving in.

PRISONERS GOLD-WASHING AT KARA

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CHAPTER XXIV

SOME DETAILS OF THE PRISON'S HISTORY—THE "TOM-CAT"—THE "SANHEDRIN'S ROOM"—MY FIRST SIBERIAN SPRING

IN conversation with those who had been imprisoned at Kara for some time one often heard the expressions: "That was before the May days," or, "That happened after the 11th of May." This mode of reckoning time had become current among us; everybody knew the story of the "May days," which had been an epoch in the prison life of Kara, just as the "February days" had been a turning-point in French history. All that lay behind the "May days" was a sort of golden age, and after them came a time of storm and stress, years of gloom and misery. I will briefly narrate the story of these events.

The Kara prison for political offenders dates from the year 1880. Before that time "politicals" were not confined in a special gaol, but in one among a great number of such prisons in this penal district, where along the River Kara are many gold-washing settlements, the private property of the Tsar—or "property of His Majesty's Cabinet," as it is officially termed. The "politicals," like the ordinary prisoners, had to wash gold for the Lord of All the Russias; but the work was not hard, and they rather enjoyed it. It was at any rate pleasanter and more wholesome to work for a few hours in the fresh air than to vegetate in prison. At that time the "politicals" enjoyed

the same privileges as the ordinary convicts; *e.g.* they had better rations than were subsequently given them, they might correspond with their relations, and at the expiration of their appointed sentences they were allowed to settle in the "free colony" outside the prison. The "politicals" were not dissatisfied with this state of things; but in December, 1880, the then Minister of the Interior, Count Loris Melikov, ordered that they should no longer be allowed in the penal colony. Shortly after this was made known one of the prisoners, a graduate of the Petersburg University, named Semyanovsky, took his own life, leaving a letter to his father, in which he declared that the idea of being permanently shut up in prison had driven him to commit suicide.

This cruel decree came at a time when the political movement was particularly strong, and we were believed to be on the eve of a great upheaval; news of revolutionary doings, though much delayed, reached the ears of the prisoners in distant Kara, and naturally made the yearning for liberty more fervent than ever. Some of those who still had a long term of punishment to suffer resolved on flight; but not till May, 1882, was it found possible to execute their plans, and the work at the mines to which they were daily led furnished them with the opportunity. It was arranged that two men were to escape each night; and by common consent the first to go was Myshkin,[1] a well-known revolutionist, who chose as his companion one of the most able of his comrades, a working-man named Nicholas Hrùstchov.[2] These two got away successfully, and to conceal their disappearance their comrades made dummies which they laid in their places on the bed-shelves when the roll was called. Galkin-Vrassky, the head of the

[1] Sentenced in 1873 to ten years' penal servitude, in the "Case of the 193," for armed resistance in an attempted rescue of Tchernishevsky from Viluisk in Yakutsk. Myshkin also received a further fifteen years, because at the burial of a comrade, Dmohovsky, he delivered a funeral oration in the prison chapel.

[2] Sentenced in the Popov trial in Kiëv to fifteen years' penal servitude.

Prisons Department, was just at that time visiting the prisons of Kara, accompanied by the Governor, Iliashèvitch; but nothing was discovered, though the fugitives were already well on their eastern journey, nearing the shore of the Pacific. After a few days a second couple escaped in the same manner, and as successfully, and then a third pair. But as the last man of a fourth pair was making off, the sentry fired and alarmed the watch; the shot missed, but the absence of eight prisoners was discovered. That was on May 11th, 1882; Galkin-Vrassky and Iliashèvitch were still in Kara, and the presence of their chiefs fired the local authorities to special exertions in following up the fugitives; six were soon captured,[1] only the first two remaining at large.

Reprisals were at once taken against the other political prisoners; some were conveyed in small parties to different prisons, and treated with terrible severity on the way; the Kara prison was rebuilt, the large common rooms being each converted into three cells so small that one could scarcely turn round in them; while within a special enclosure a building was erected with narrow cells for solitary confinement, wherein some of the revolutionists were incarcerated. All books and other possessions were taken from the "politicals"; they were allowed no food except that provided by the State; and were subjected to so many hardships and privations that they unanimously resolved to put an end to their lives by refusing to eat; and only when they were at death's door were some concessions made by the authorities.

Myshkin and Hrùstchov were for some time lucky in evading detection. They got as far as Vladivostock, and were in the act of seeking safety on board a foreign vessel when they were recognised as the long-sought fugitives, and captured. All sacrifices had been vain, and the

[1] Moses Dihovsky, fifteen years' penal servitude; Levtchenko, fifteen; Andreas Balamutz, twenty; Kratzenovsky, Yurhovsky, and Minyukov, all for life.

prisoners of the mighty Tsar were once more secured in the Kara prison, which had meanwhile undergone further changes. The "politicals" were separated from the ordinary convicts, and the male and female divisions of the political prison placed under the control of the gendarmerie. Koros, a staff officer of gendarmes, was sent from Petersburg and installed as commandant; and a number of inferior officers of gendarmerie were made warders. The whole system was at the same time completely altered; the workshops were removed, and the prisoners forced to remain idle; they were not allowed to leave the precincts of the gaol, and correspondence with their friends was forbidden. Moreover, as has been said elsewhere, thirteen of their number were despatched to the Fortress of Peter and Paul and thence to Schlüsselburg, where now (1902) only one of them survives.

During the four years that had elapsed since the "May days" there had been four changes of commandant. One of these gentlemen had been superseded and sent to Yakutsk for appropriating to his own private uses one thousand roubles of money sent to the prisoners. Each change of commandant meant some modification of arrangements, and thus by degrees various small improvements were made, among others the breaking down of the partition walls in the rooms; while, in consequence of an appeal made by a prisoner's influential relations, the Loris Melikov order was finally annulled, and "politicals" were once more allowed to reside in the penal colony when their proportion of years in prison was past. The legal regulations concerning the latter privilege were as follows: in the fulfilment of all hard-labour (or "katorga") sentences the first one or two years—according to the length of the sentence—are called "probation time"; the remaining years are called "time of alleviation," and in them every ten months count as a year. In this way, for example, my thirteen years and four months became eleven years and five months; and being sentenced on

October 12th, 1884, I should finish my term in February, 1896. The entire "probation time" and two or three years of the "time of alleviation" must be spent in prison; but after that the law provided that the prisoner should be allowed to reside in the "colony," under police supervision, instead of within the prison walls. Such partially freed prisoners might take up their abode in some house assigned to them, or built by themselves; but they were subject to the rules and regulations laid down for the convicts residing there, ordinary and political alike. It was a great matter to be no longer cooped up day and night in a common room of the prison; the "politicals"—people of culture and refinement — appreciated this particularly, and the withdrawal of the privilege had been a terrible deprivation. The greater, therefore, was the rejoicing when, two years after the "May days," the new commandant, Captain Burlei, who had succeeded the thief Manayev, informed the captives in the political prison of Kara that some time previously a resolution of the senate had rescinded the adverse decree. The dishonest Manayev had suppressed the document proclaiming this, that he might the more easily continue to conceal his malpractices. Captain Burlei immediately proposed to the governor of the district that steps should be taken forthwith for the release from prison and internment in the "colony" of all those who had become entitled to that right. Before this could be arranged, however, the humane commandant was replaced by Nikolin, who would only allow the new rules to come into force under certain restrictions. The senate had made their decision; the law was there, and must be complied with; but by "administrative methods" he continued to limit its operations.

Captain Nikolin was a malicious, small-minded man, always on the look-out for ways of annoying the prisoners; and now, on the pretence that he had not a strong enough force of gendarmes to supervise the "colony," he asked that instead of releasing all who were entitled to the

privilege, only fifteen persons at a time should be set free. His excuse was groundless, for under the circumstances the same force of gendarmes could have equally well controlled the greater or smaller number of "colonists"; but of course the wish of the commandant was acceded to, and it thus came about that those who should have obtained the right of living outside the prison had often to wait years until there was a vacancy, and even then there might be a dozen candidates for it, from among whom Nikolin arbitrarily selected a recipient of the favour. Of course this curtailment of their rights earned Nikolin the ardent dislike of the prisoners; and his conduct was such as continually to aggravate that sentiment anew.

I had an opportunity of seeing this man soon after being placed under his charge. He often came into the prison—into the corridor, that is, for he never entered the rooms. He might have been nearly fifty-five, rather big, with an imposing "corporation"; his broad round face, cunning little eyes, and bristling moustache, gave him the look of a fat, spiteful old tom-cat, and he was always designated by that nickname. The expression of his eyes was particularly catlike; he looked as if just ready to pounce on a victim and stick his claws into it. He always spoke in a low voice, this "tom-cat"; but he chattered unceasingly, and kept smacking his lips all the time, his expression being always peevish and discontented. When he visited the prison he generally remained for some time standing by our *stàrosta*, who would be busy beside his big chest; and Nikolin would talk away, quite regardless whether his conversation were agreeable to the listener or not. During these endless monologues he would brag and boast in the most inflated way. Could we have accepted his own account of his exploits, he would by this time have been at least a general. He had begun his career during the sixties under Mouravièv, the oppressor of Vilna, and he would recount the inestimable services he had rendered at that epoch. Yet he was still only a

captain! Possibly an excess of zeal had spoiled his prospects; at any rate, he used to relate the following story of what had happened to him in Kara. He had once addressed a communication to the governor of the province, asking this highly important question: "When the floor of a room was being scrubbed, and the prisoners were consequently turned out into the corridor, should the warder take them into another room or not?"

"Imagine!" the "tom-cat" would cry. "The answer I received was this: 'Arrange the matter for yourself according to Paragraph 13 of the instructions.'" Now the instructions only contained twelve paragraphs, but the irony of the rejoinder never struck Nikolin, and he continued to fuss on every occasion over any sort of trifle. He seemed, too, to think that his position as commandant of the political prisoners did not give him enough scope for grumbling, but poked his nose into everything that went on in the district of Kara. Once, indeed, he did actually succeed in discovering a series of thefts from the coffers of the State. There was a certain Major Pohùlov, governor of the ordinary convicts' prison (with whom Mr. Kennan stayed during his visit to Kara). One fine day a storehouse under his charge, supposed to contain some thousands of poods of grain for the prisoners' use, was burnt down. Now grain stored in great heaps does not burn away, but simply gets roasted; yet on this occasion there was no trace of it to be found, the gallant major having had a little deal with the purveyor, and then, with the help of his subordinates, having arranged that the warehouse should be burnt down in the nick of time.

Probably this transaction would have remained in the dark, like many others of the kind, had not our "tom-cat" taken the matter up and by his denunciations forced the Government to appoint a commission of inquiry on which he himself served.

He then revealed the full range of his talents, and brought to the light of day a whole system of robbery and

fraud. The "hospitable gentleman," as Kennan described Major Pohùlov (and indeed so he was), had had more than one device for enriching himself at the State's expense. For instance, hundreds of prisoners figured on his list who had long since either been released or had escaped, and for these "ghosts" he had regularly charged his books with clothing and food allowances, whilst he and the purveyor had fraternally shared the money between them. This man was dismissed from his office, but was never brought to justice, as he had influential friends who shielded him.

Although my comrades in the "nobles' room" were most sympathetic companions to me, I had a great wish to be transferred to the room inhabited by my friend Stefanòvitch, and permission for this had to be asked of the "tom-cat." He at first refused it, on the excuse that he must get the governor's sanction; but I heard in a roundabout way that he pretended to fear lest if Stefanòvitch and I got together we might manage to escape. This was arrant nonsense, as since the gendarmes had had charge of the prison there had been no faintest possibility of escaping from it; but the "tom-cat" had to find some pretext or other for tormenting us. A few weeks later he finally gave his consent, and I became my friend's "chum" in the "Sanhedrin room."

The whole aspect of life in this apartment differed materially from that in the "nobles' room." A good many of the inmates were artisans, and some of the others had a turn for manual work, in consequence of which the room had quite the look of a workshop. The possession of tools was forbidden, but they had them notwithstanding, though nothing of the kind was ever to be seen when an inspection took place. These inspections, though minute, were "superficial," as the gendarmerie expressed it; that is, we were never personally searched, so we simply put our tools in our pockets when the inspection began.

Some of our workmen were past masters in their craft.

Hrùstchov, a hero of the "May days," was one of these, and another proficient was the locksmith Bubnovsky. With scraps of iron, old nails, and such-like he made a tiny lathe that could go into his pocket. With this little lathe he fashioned all the parts of a clock, and, though he had never been a watchmaker, produced a most artistic time-piece, that later found place in a Siberian museum. Almost all kinds of handiwork were carried on in our workshop, many of them having been learned entirely from books. Patience and endurance—lessons taught by prison life—had fruitful results when applied to such ends; and the theoretical studies that were undertaken, one comrade learning from another, also profited by those qualities. Knowledge was eagerly sought after in this room, and the *quondam* students helped the working-men. Yatzèvitch and Zlatopòlsky came there every day to give instruction in mathematics and natural science; Fomitchov occupied the chair of Russian languages, and so on. On this account our room was sometimes called "the Academy."

Among the workmen a certain Karl Ivanein interested me much. By birth a Finn, but thoroughly Russified, his passion was for the finer branches of literature, and in these he was very well read. He was an enthusiastic adherent of Tolstoi's teaching, and any hostile criticism of that sage stung his proselyte to eager defence. His was a highly gifted but eccentric character: soon after I became acquainted with him he was released from prison and sent to live in the penal settlement, where in a very little while he committed suicide.

Fomin and Fomitchov were noted among the other students in our room for their determined industry. Fomin I had known in Switzerland, where he had lived for some time as a refugee. He had been an officer of infantry; was arrested for making propaganda among the soldiers, and imprisoned in Vilna, but escaped by the help of a comrade. He could not long endure to remain abroad, and returned to Russia, where he managed to conceal him-

self for a time, but was arrested in 1882 in Petersburg and condemned to twenty years' penal servitude. While in Kara he occupied himself with the study of natural science, particularly mineralogy.

Of Fomitchov I had heard much, as a very active revolutionist, but had never met him before. The son of a poor sacristan, he had studied in Odessa, where in 1877 he was arrested, and charged before a court-martial with making propaganda among soldiers; but even under martial law it was found impossible to convict him, and he was set free amid the applause of the onlookers, who gave both him and his counsel a perfect ovation. Soon afterwards, however, he was again imprisoned, and was condemned together with Lisogùb, Tchubàrov, and others, his sentence being penal servitude for life. In consequence of his attempted escape while on the journey, which I have already mentioned,[1] he was chained to the wheelbarrow[2] for a year. He busied himself with historical studies, more especially in Russian history, and had read a great deal on that subject; but unfortunately our library was one-sided in this branch, and only provided him with voluminous and rather out-of-date works, such as those of Schlosser, Weber, Mommsen, Soloviev, and Kostomarov. It may have been partly owing to the bias of these guides, partly to some odd twist in his own mind, but anyhow our friend Fomitchov—a clever and extremely painstaking student, an excellent comrade, and a man of strong character generally—came to adopt most extraordinary views for a political prisoner. He was not only an ardent patriot and Russsophil; but also—which seemed especially incomprehensible—an extreme monarchist, and a passionate upholder of the Romanov dynasty! A political offender, a convict for life, yet a fanatic for

[1] See note, page 189.

[2] This punishment consists in fastening a wheelbarrow by chains to the prisoner so that he is obliged to push it about with him wherever he goes; and even when he wishes to sleep he must contrive to hoist it into such a position as will render lying down possible.—*Trans.*

Russian absolutism: a strange combination, truly! If a man holding such opinions had petitioned for pardon it would have seemed only logical; not one of us would have seen anything dishonourable in his taking such a step, but Fomitchov abstained from doing so. He persisted in the curious view that it was his duty to abide his fate and wear out his life in a Siberian prison, as expiation of his rebellion against the Tsar, of whose wise policy for the government of his subjects Fomitchov had now not the slightest doubt. It might have been confidently asserted that among all the courtiers and dignitaries surrounding him, Alexander III. had no more loyal and devoted adherent than this political convict in Kara prison. The most unjust and cruel ukase of the Tsar's Government found in Fomitchov a defender who could always discover therein some salutary principle intended to promote the welfare of the people. That people he loved beyond everything, even to the sacrificing of his own life, if need were; and therefore was he compelled to be for ever attempting the theoretical reconciliation of governmental Tsarism with the people's good. Any attack on the Tsar incensed him to such a degree that he would often break off all intercourse with anyone who made His Majesty the object of hostile comment. Many of us seriously doubted if the man could rightly be considered sane.

Naturally Fomitchov stood alone in this exaggeration of royalist enthusiasm, but as a Russophil he found many sympathisers. A certain number among us were firmly persuaded that Russian social and domestic conditions were far superior to those of Western Europe, and disputes about this supposed Russian perfection were endless; they were the occasion of many a wager, and not infrequently caused serious estrangements between friends, or—as our double-Dutch expressed it—"climatic disturbances." This strange belief in the superiority of backward Russia was a ruling craze of the time in our country. The entire progressive press was Russophil in that sense; and the

tendency had manifested itself even in Socialist literature, in the passionate insistence that, Russian conditions being perfectly different from those of any other country, the revolutionary struggle must proceed on essentially distinct lines. I must confess that I was often pained to hear men suffering for their convictions giving vent to opinions so strongly resembling the arguments of hardened reactionaries.

One of the most strenuous advocates of these views in our room was a man who—strange to say—bore the reputation of being among the ablest in the prison. Nicholas Posen had been a village school-teacher who had taken no specially active part in the revolutionary movement, but had chanced to participate in armed resistance to the gendarmerie at Kiëv, and had been brought to trial in consequence, together with Maria Kovalèvskaya and others. He had been condemned to fourteen years and ten months' "katorga," subsequently increased by another fourteen years, for an attempt to escape from prison in Irkutsk. He was well educated and intelligent, but he had no political convictions worth mentioning. He had a passion for argument, and would discuss anything and everything by the hour, always ready to prove any given proposition, and seizing any pretext for a debate—a philosophical problem, or any everyday trifle. Serious study was not his forte, and his everlasting chatter disturbed others at their work; hardly had his eyes opened in the morning before his tongue was set in motion, and it never rested all day long.

A favourite theme with him was speculation about the day's food: "What do you think we shall have for supper to-night?" he would ask, buttonholing somebody; "I am sure they are making 'everyone-likes-it.'" "Perhaps; but perhaps it is mince and groats," his interlocutor might say, just to please him by falling in with his humour. Then Posen's tongue would be loosened, and he would prove his important point beyond question, giving all his

reasons; he would dilate on it for half an hour, and would wind up with, "Will you back your opinion?"

"All right, we'll have something on it; what shall it be?"

"Three matches!" cries Posen; everyone laughs; and he himself seems thoroughly pleased with his joke. He had at bottom a vain and petty spirit, and showed later that he could come to any compromise with the authorities in order to satisfy his own small desires.

Deficiency and poverty of nourishment soon affected my health, although I had all my life hitherto been thoroughly robust. After a few months I felt a weakness in the legs, and could no longer hold myself upright; then black and blue patches made their appearance on the skin of my legs, my gums began to suppurate, and my teeth became loose. I betook myself to our medical adviser, Prybylyev.

"Hullo, my friend, you have got a beautiful attack of scurvy!" said he; "you've been quick about it." He ordered me invalid diet, and I was given a daily cutlet with plenty of garlic. I was not the only one to suffer in this way from the insufficient feeding; next spring a number of us were victims to the same disease, and, strangely enough, it was always the strongest and healthiest who succumbed. Improved diet and the skil of our good Prybylyev soon tided me over the worst; after a while I could walk once more without crutches, my gums healed, and soon I could dispense with invalid food. For a long time, however, I felt the after-effects of my illness.

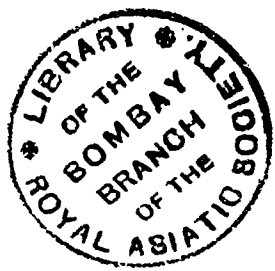
I have a keen recollection of my first spring in Kara. I was overcome by an indescribable yearning and longing that made the burden of the aimless, senseless life within prison walls lie like a leaden weight on my spirits, in face of the new life of nature springing up so freely all around. Even reading, almost the sole occupation I could invent for myself outside the daily work, was impossible. The

letters danced before my eyes; no sense of what I had read remained in my mind; memory failed me; and my fancy alone worked untiringly. In any case mental exertion under the conditions of prison life has but little result in proportion to the time and energy expended; the physical state of the prisoner reacts on his mind, dulling his faculties and weakening his resolution. But in the spring-time, when every living thing revives and asserts itself in action, it is hardly possible to resist distraction from merely mental labour.

Our prison lay in the trough of a valley between ranges of hills, and from the yard these hills could be seen by us. There was very scanty vegetation on those Siberian heights; yet in spring they appeared to us like a distant Paradise that beckoned irresistibly. Close by we had only the well-trodden courtyard, where not even a blade of grass peeped forth, the black weather-stained wooden walls of the prison buildings, and the tall posts of the stockade; our eyes dwelt on the farther prospect, and we pictured to ourselves the delight of treading on soft turf under the shade of trees.

We petitioned our "tom-cat" for leave to plant a garden in the yard; there was space enough, the work would have been beneficial, and then we might have had vegetables for our table, the deficiency in which particular had been so detrimental to our health. The "tom-cat" roundly refused. "We should need spades," he said, "and they might be used to dig a hole whereby to get away." So, again, when one of us was sent some flower-seeds and sowed them in a wooden box, the box was taken away by Nikolin's orders: the earth in it might have served to conceal some contraband article. Such needless tyrannies embittered us still more against the detested commandant. However peaceably we might otherwise have been inclined, our hatred of this man might well have blazed out at any opportunity; he himself probably guessed as much, for he became more and more mistrustful, at last never entering

our prison. He felt that he had made enemies all round him, and sat lonely in his own house, or squabbled with his cook, afraid to show himself outside. It may be a matter of surprise that one of his many enemies did not find a way to put an end to him, that being a not unusual course of events in Kara; but finally he could endure such a life no longer, and applied to be transferred elsewhere. In the spring of 1887 his application was granted, and he departed, accompanied by the anathemas of the entire population of Kara.


LIBRARY OF THE BOMBAY BRANCH OF THE ROYAL ASIATIC SOCIETY

CHAPTER XXV

HUMOURS AND PASTIMES OF PRISON LIFE—TWO NEW COMMANDANTS—THE "HOSPITAL"—THE PARTICIPATORS IN ARMED RESISTANCE

OUR life was one of dismal uniformity. Day after day, month after month, went past and left no trace in remembrance. One day was exactly like another, and all alike seemed endless. Whole years elapsed, and from each three hundred and sixty-five days there could not be singled out one on which any event had occurred worthy of recollection. In vain one racks one's brain trying to arouse a memory of that monotonous past. When we arose in the morning we knew exactly what the day would bring; indeed, one knew beforehand what the next day and the next week and month would contain. One knew the manners, customs, inclinations of every comrade in misfortune, could tell what each would be likely to say or do on any given occasion, and sometimes one would long to run away and hide, and never see their faces again. But there is no running away; every minute of the year you are obliged to endure the company of those others, and to burden them with your own; there is not a moment in which you can be alone, not a corner in the common room to which you can withdraw for real privacy.

To all this is added the rigour of the prison routine: the roll-call morning and evening, the periodical inspections, the shaving of heads that takes place with painful regularity, the constant presence of the gendarmes. The

strain at times becomes insupportable, and the nerves are so shattered that the creaking of the great lock in the frequent opening and shutting of the door affects one almost to madness. Many of us became irritable to an extent incomprehensible to a normally sound person, and with some of us (though not with many) this would at times lead to loss of temper and quarrelling over the veriest nothings. It thus once happened that two friends, both intelligent and well-educated men of mature years, fell out with one another literally about an egg-shell, which occasioned a dispute that led to a break between them. This can only be conceivable if one realises that even people who love each other tenderly might find it difficult to endure such close and uninterrupted intercourse. What, then, must have been our situation, locked up together, forced to inflict unwillingly on each other a companionship which there was no alternative but to accept?

We had, however, our small joys and alleviations. The most welcome event was the arrival of the post, which in winter came every ten days, in summer every week. I can hardly depict the intense eagerness with which many of us awaited the post days, counting the hours till the mail might be expected to reach the prison. Some would stand for hours by the stockade, watching to see the commandant start on his drive to the post-office, which was some versts distant; then they would impatiently await his return, not omitting to let their comrades know the result of their observations. The post brought us letters, newspapers, books, money, and occasionally a parcel—a present, a token of affection. All this made indeed a break in the dull routine of daily existence, and not one could remain an uninterested spectator. On the arrival of money depended our common exchequer, and the amount of our private pocket-money; newspapers and reviews brought the news for which we thirsted passionately, especially the tidings of political events. They were eagerly seized on, and their reading at once furnished

subjects of talk and discussion, although those years were times of thorough reaction, not only in Russia, but in Western Europe, so that what we read was nearly always disheartening, causing us to lay the paper down depressed in spirits.

Moreover, only the most conservative, uninteresting papers were permitted us, with the sole exception of the well-known review *Vèstnik Evropuy* (*The European Messenger*), which for some unknown reason was allowed to pass. Some of our newspaper readers studied the whole publication from beginning to end, and remembered every little detail. Many of us, however, were chiefly interested in the arrival of home letters, the source of so much joy and of so much sorrow. Constant anxiety about our dear ones was caused by the long interval between the despatch and the receipt of correspondence, which was often six weeks or two months on the way, and when the roads were impassable, as is often the case in Siberia for months together, the posts were even longer delayed.

All letters received by us were first read by the commandant, and subjected to a strict censure; they were also tested with a solution of chlorate of iron, to see whether any entries had been made in them with invisible chemical ink. But what was most cruel was that we were not permitted to answer on our own account; we might only send a post card in the name of the commandant, acknowledging the receipt of a letter or other communication, and giving the briefest information as to health, somewhat in this fashion: "Your son (brother, nephew) is well. The money (or whatever it was) sent to him by you has been received, and he begs you to send him the following——" This is signed by the commandant, but as the card is written by the prisoner himself, his correspondents may be assured from his handwriting that he is alive and is in possession of their missives, nothing further. Under such conditions correspondence is often a torture to both parties, yet those who could have

even this much intercourse with home were envied by the lonely ones who never expected letters at all. There was more than one such among us, and how often when the letters were distributed would one or other of them say sorrowfully, "If only someone would send me a line!" It is terrible to think of being thousands of miles from home in the solitudes of Siberia, and not to know of a single soul who may sometimes remember one's existence; yet, as I say, some of our comrades at Kara were in this forlorn situation. How great was the rejoicing if one of these outcasts unexpectedly received a letter from some relation, or some friend of former days! The lucky one would order tea, and perhaps even cakes for the whole room to celebrate the occasion; the letter itself would become a much-talked-of treasure, and the most interesting portions would be read aloud to intimate friends.

Treating one's room-mates was also customary if one had had any specially good news from home. The contents of such a letter would be immediately imparted to all the other rooms, and sometimes extracts containing tidings of universal interest would be circulated. Certainly the commandants, and the "tom-cat" particularly, took every means for suppressing such tidings, blotting out in our letters everything outside the narrow circle of personal matters; but we had always ways and means of obtaining intelligence of political and other events that it concerned us to know about. The inventiveness shown by some of our party in devising this was sometimes astonishing; moreover, we occasionally managed to get delivered to us through the commandant literature strictly prohibited in Russia. He, of course, was enjoined to examine most carefully every book and parcel that arrived; but we contrived to supplement the officially prescribed channels of correspondence, either by inducing some corruptible member of the prison staff to assist us, or by some other device. Intercourse with the women's prison, which was strictly forbidden, was also effected by means of this "secret post,"

and it likewise enabled us to communicate with the exiles in different parts of Siberia.

Our official postal transactions were always effected through our *stàrosta*, the commandant telling him what money had been received and for whom, and he informing the prisoners. The librarian had charge of all printed matter sent to us, and the order in which each new book or newspaper should be passed round was arranged most exactly beforehand. If anyone had a present—linen, boots, or anything of that kind—it was open to him to keep it for himself or to hand it over to the *stàrosta*. In the latter case everyone was made aware that such and such things were to be had; whoever wanted them might announce the fact, and the award was decided by lot. If the gift consisted of eatables, it was at once given to the *stàrosta*, who divided it among the rooms. In each room there was a "general divider"—one whose office it was to divide with scrupulous exactitude among all the inmates every portion of food and every tit-bit that fell to their share—a task which frequently called for the exhibition of much talent and artistic judgment. This post of "divider" was usually held by somebody of a mathematical turn, and he officiated as carver at meals, serving out each person's due portion with careful impartiality.

This striving after equality in every particular developed into a passion with some of our number, till it became actually painful to them to receive any little gift that could not be shared, and they would feel obliged to apologise for it to all their comrades; very rarely did anyone who received a present wish selfishly to keep it entirely to himself. A few were so scrupulous that they did not consider it right, in asking for new books from home, to consult merely their own individual taste, but made the others draw up a list of books that they wished for; and that perfect equality might govern the transaction, the sum of money set aside for the purchase was divided among the whole number of prisoners, so that each one could choose

books to the value of the amount allotted to him. In this way everybody would be catered for—the lover of *belles lettres* as well as the student of abstruse scientific or philosophical subjects.

Ranking next to the mails as a source of enjoyment must be reckoned the bath-house. Especially after a week of hard and dirty kitchen work, the vapour-bath and clean linen were a real luxury, and when one came from the bath-room, extended one's tired limbs on the bed-shelf, and let one's thoughts wander idly as one sipped hot tea, a feeling of such physical well-being would pervade one as to cause all disagreeables to be forgotten for the moment. Although the freshly donned under-linen was anything but fine, and not very artistically washed and got up, being apt to scratch a sensitive skin; although the grey prison-clothes were neither convenient nor beautiful—still one revelled in the sensation of comfort and relaxation, and if it happened also to be mail-day, delight was complete.

"Well, I hope you're enjoying yourself, you epicurean!" someone would cry, knowing full well himself the pleasure of such an hour.

Chess was a favourite pastime, and we had some champion players among us, especially Yatzèvitch and Zoubrtchitsky, who, besides having had much practice, had studied the game scientifically. Sometimes we had chess tournaments, with all the rigour of the game, and prizes were given—of course, consisting of tea or some other of our small luxuries. On such occasions the whole prison took the liveliest interest in the combat; the final "mate" being announced in all the rooms, and the play exhaustively criticised.

Music was also cultivated. Our choir had an extensive repertory, in which the melancholy moods of Little Russia were contrasted with the dramatic Great Russian folk-songs. It included operatic choruses, and, of course, the revolutionary songs so dear to us all—the Marseillaise and many others. After Commandant Nikolin had departed,

and we were less harried and thwarted, one of our geniuses constructed a violin, upon which various gifted friends practised with great assiduity: not—it must be confessed—exactly to the edification of the rest of us who had perforce to listen. Posen and one or two others tortured the ears of their comrades further by truly terrible musical performances on ordinary hair-combs.

Another way of passing time was to invent riddles and act charades, which was especially fashionable in our "Sanhedrin." And when some new-comers brought with them a few packs of cards, the game of whist—then just coming into vogue in Russia—so carried away some of our party that they were at it literally day and night. On the whole, however, card-playing did not find much favour among us.

Physical exercise would have been most welcome to many of us, but as long as the "tom-cat" ruled the roast it was possible only in a very restricted measure; all he would consent to was that in winter we should make a sledge-track in a part of the yard where the ground sloped slightly, and we there disported ourselves on little sledges made by ourselves.

One of Nikolin's successors saw no objection to our laying out a garden, and during the next spring we were extremely busy over this. Some of our number, great lovers of nature, exhibited quite passionate energy in this pursuit; they worked at their beds with most industrious care, watered, manured, and weeded untiringly, and tended each plant as though it were a beloved child. All sorts of different plants and flowers were cultivated. I myself had a special affection for sunflowers, which reminded me of my South Russian home; wherever possible I sowed their seeds, and in summer my fosterlings shot up magnificently, their thick stems standing erect along our "boulevard," as we called the path by the stockade, whence, by looking through the chinks, we could see the road and the commandant's house. When the tall

YARD OF KARA PRISON FOR "POLITICALS"

YARD OF KARA PRISON FOR "POLITICALS"

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plants hung down their heads, it seemed as though they looked down on us poor captives and wondered at the cruelty of man to man. "So many young men wasting their best years, half their lives, here in prison, only because they strove for the welfare of their country as they understood it!" And when the sunflowers straightened themselves and held aloft their golden crowns, they might be saying, "Do not lose courage, poor convicts! The time will come when you too with proudly lifted heads shall return to your beloved home."

Nikolin's successor, Captain Yakovlov, exerted himself to mitigate the severity of our prison régime, which the "tom-cat" had administered so tyrannically. He seemed to be a compassionate and humane man, who—while keeping to the prescribed regulations—was not concerned to aggravate our hard lot by superfluous restrictions and unnecessary harshness. Perhaps his conduct was partly influenced by the knowledge that he was only filling the position temporarily, as a stop-gap for Colonel Masyukov of the gendarmerie, who was shortly to be sent from Petersburg; probably also he wanted to have as little squabbling with us as possible. He belonged to a class of men to be found in great numbers both in Russia and in Siberia, who have one overwhelming weakness—love of drink. His devotion to the bottle was most assiduous, and he often had evidently had more than was good for him; but for all that, we breathed more freely under his rule, and regarded with anxiety the advent of the new commandant.

After a six months' interval Colonel Masyukov entered upon his office, in the winter of 1877, and made his first round of the prison, accompanied by Yakovlov. He was a man of short stature, with grey hair and moustache, very quick in his movements, despite his fifty years; he spoke in an unpleasant falsetto voice, and looked rather like a plucked chicken. His whole appearance betokened

a weak and characterless disposition, as unluckily proved to be the case, both to his own and our misfortune. Intellectually limited, but good-tempered enough, Masyukov was quite unlike one's idea of a staff officer of gendarmerie; indeed, he was in no way cut out for such a service, and knew this himself better than anyone. He had only joined the gendarmerie as a result of unforeseen circumstances. Son of a country gentleman, he had been for a time an officer in the Guards, afterwards returning to his estate, where he gave himself up to riotous living. The good dinners he gave were probably the reason of his being elected Marshal of Nobility for his district, and his subsequent dissipation led eventually to the ruin of his finances. To re-establish himself in some measure, and also, it was said, to discharge his debts of honour, he was obliged again to enter the service of the State, and he became an officer of gendarmes, induced by the higher pay given in that branch of the service, as compared with others of like standing, especially for those employed in the distant parts of Siberia. The Commandant of Kara was paid four to five thousand roubles per annum, with house, servants, horses, fuel, etc. As a late officer in the Guards and Marshal of Nobility, Masyukov was soon made colonel, and appointed to the vacant post at Kara. He himself declared afterwards that he had come with the honest intention of doing his best to better our lot; but hell is proverbially paved with good resolutions, and the political prisoners suffered more under this well-meaning *bon vivant* than under many a thorough-paced tyrant. But I will not anticipate.

During the early days of Masyukov's rule we were able to rejoice in more than one concession. Besides the granting of our petition for a garden, the doors of our rooms were now hardly ever locked by day, and within the stockade surrounding the prison yard we could wander about as we pleased. In Nikolin's time one of the rooms had always been empty, and for some reason or other

he had refused to let us use it; now we were allowed possession of it, and also of the wing containing single cells, during the summer months. We thus had more space, and anyone who wished for solitude could be alone for a few hours at a time; our musicians, too, with their instruments of torture, could be sent where they disturbed no one.

Another relief was that the rule against the possession of tools was less strictly interpreted, and we were no longer obliged to conceal any work we had in hand. A vice and some other tools were procured, and our arts and crafts flourished exceedingly. Even an amateur photographer was discovered among us, and with the help of our carpenters set up a regular studio; but I cannot say that his performances were at all remarkable.

Masyukov did his best to meet our views, and fulfilled our requests whenever possible. Among other things he agreed that we might settle as we liked in what room each of us should live; so Stefanòvitch and I at once made use of this permission. Our two and a half years' abode in the "Sanhedrin" had been very irksome to us both, and when the "great migration" caused by the above-mentioned expansion of our territory took place, we transferred ourselves into the room called the "Commune," or sometimes "the hospital." It was more comfortable than the other rooms in one or two particulars; it contained proper bedsteads, for instance, and besides the big table there were also little tables, one between each pair of beds.

It was, as a rule, unusual for the inmates of a room voluntarily to change their abode; we called the feeling about this "room-patriotism." Such patriots were very keen about their own room, which was, of course, always "the best"; they never left their room-mates in the lurch, were proud of the success of any of them, and sorrowed over their griefs. The inmates of the "Commune" seemed the least possessed by this *esprit de corps*, perhaps because

most of them were among those nomads who had already changed rooms more than once. Here, too, in contradistinction to the habits of the other rooms, each man was much occupied with his own affairs; we isolated ourselves more, and rarely held common debates or jollifications; most of us immersed ourselves in serious study, and on that account less noise and merriment went on among us.

One of the most interesting of our new room-mates, and an original altogether, was Leo Zlatopolsky,[1] to whom I must devote a few words. He had studied in the Petersburg Technological Institute, had been concerned in the "Trial of the Twenty" in 1882, and sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude. He had never himself been an active revolutionist, but as he was proficient in mathematical and mechanical knowledge, he had helped the Terrorists in purely technical matters. Even as a student he had been looked on as an inventive genius, and in prison inventions became a mania with him. For a long time he was busy with the project of a circular town, wherein everything was to be run by electricity; and even plants were to be cultivated by that means, for the light and heat of the sun were much too simple affairs to satisfy our inventor. He had a scheme for a flying-machine that should not only carry us all up into aërial heights, but should also be unaffected by the velocity of our Mother Earth's proper motion. Then he evolved his own theory of values; and beside all these high matters he would also occupy himself with the most prosaic and humble affairs, such as new methods of doing the washing, boiling potatoes, or making shoes. He elaborated a new theory of heating dwellings, invented new card games; in short, in every department of life, he was prepared to upset the existing condition of things and build it all up anew in some hitherto undreamt-of fashion. His beautiful plans, however, all suffered from one small disqualification: they were never practicable in

[1] See portrait, p. 209.

DULEMBA, KOHN, RECHNYEVSKY, LURI, MANKOVSKY

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real life. That, of course, he would never allow, declaring his inventions to be perfect and beyond criticism; but this did not prevent him from throwing one after another aside to pursue some fresh idea with equal energy. Not unnaturally he soon became the butt of everyone's jokes, and most absurd stories were told about him. He was really a very capable and learned man; but there was just something wanting to make him a genius. Perhaps we were right in setting him down, as we did, among Lombroso's "matoids."

During the first three years of my stay in Kara the number of prisoners in our prison remained practically constant; a few were allowed to settle in the penal colony, but their places were soon taken by new-comers. Besides Spandoni—left behind at Krasnoyarsk, as I have related—who rejoined us at Kara in the spring of 1886, five comrades arrived in the autumn of the same year. They had been condemned in the "Case of the Proletariat," in Warsaw: Dulemba, a workman, to thirteen years' "katorga"; Kohn, a student, eight years; Luri, an officer of engineers, condemned to death, but reprieved and sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude; Mankòvsky, a workman, sixteen years; Rechnyèvsky, a graduate of the College of Jurisprudence in Petersburg, fourteen years.[1] The year after came Pashkòvsky, who in March, 1887, was condemned, (as a participator in the attempt upon Alexander III.,) to ten years' "katorga"; and the peasant Ozovsky, sentenced to six years. In the course of 1888 arrived Peter Yakubòvitch and Souhomlìn,[2] sentenced respectively to eighteen and fifteen years' penal servitude, both in the Lopàtin case.

In the course of time participators in nearly every political trial of the period—from the famous Netshaëv case in 1871 to that of Lopàtin and Sigida in 1887—were

[1] See portrait-group opposite. From a photograph taken on the arrival at Kara of these five "politicals."—*Trans.*

[2] See portrait, p. 260.

numbered among the "politicals" in the two Kara prisons, that for men and that for women; and as, of course, the various comrades talked much of the events in which they themselves had been concerned, Kara furnished a sort of living chronicle of the revolutionary movement, and was perhaps the only place where one could study the history of Russian Socialism from the testimony of personal experience. None of us, however, ever thought of committing to paper the material that was here available; and it is much to be doubted whether there is now anyone left in a position to do so. Much that would be extremely interesting is probably destined to remain buried in oblivion.

During my term of imprisonment none of those implicated in the first-mentioned Netshaëv trial (which belonged to the "Propagandist" phase of our movement, in 1870,) were still in Kara. They had all been released from prison and sent into exile, and I saw nothing of them; but of course I had known personally many of these revolutionists of earlier days when they were still in freedom.

I shared the captivity of several who were sentenced in the various political trials towards the end of the seventies, these having been mostly concerned in deeds of violence, from armed resistance to the police to attempts on the life of the Tsar. The chief combatants in that terrorist campaign had for the most part ended their days on the scaffold, or were buried alive within the grim walls of Schlüsselburg or in the Alexei-Ravelin wing of the Fortress of Peter and Paul. I had been acquainted with most of them, both men and women, before their fate overtook them, and I could set down much that I learned from these comrades in the terrorist struggle; but my reminiscences already threaten to assume formidable dimensions, and I will only briefly mention some of the most remarkable of such incidents.

Voynoràlsky and Kovàlik were two prominent actors in the Propagandist movement, both of whom had been justices of the peace. In May, 1876, when imprisoned in

LURI, SOUHOMLIN, AND RECHNYEVSKY, IN PRISON DRESS

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the examination-prison in Petersburg, assisted by comrades outside they made an attempt to escape. They succeeded in getting out of their cell and climbing down a rope-ladder from one of the corridor windows; but an official who happened to be driving past the prison, thinking they were ordinary criminals, gave the alarm, and they were caught. They were sentenced to terms of penal servitude in the "Trial of the 193"; but again an attempt was made to rescue them, a plan being made to enable them to escape while being transported to the Khàrkov prison, where the prisoners considered most dangerous were then confined. This was in July, 1878. A number of armed men, two of them mounted, stopped the prison-van in which Voynoràlsky and Kovàlik were being conveyed; one of the gendarmes guarding it was shot, and the attempt might have been successful had not the horses taken fright and stampeded, which led to the recapture of the prisoners. Voynoràlsky and Kovàlik spent many years of confinement in European Russia, and were then sent, in company with many other revolutionists, to Kara, where they finished their term of imprisonment, subsequently being exiled in Yakutsk. Most of their companions found graves in the wilds of Siberia, but Voynoràlsky and Kovàlik survived their hour of release; in the winter of 1898–1899 they returned to European Russia, where Voynoràlsky died soon afterwards in his own home.

The attempted rescue just described had further consequences. The evening after, one of the riders who had stopped the prison-van was arrested at Khàrkov station; this was Alexei Medvèdiev, also called Fomin. He managed subsequently to escape from Khàrkov gaol with a number of ordinary criminals, by burrowing under a wall. As, however, outside help failed them, there was nothing for it but to hide in a wood near by, where they were soon recaptured. The comrades then resolved to try and rescue Medvèdiev, and arranged the following plan.

Two young men, Berezniàk and Rashko, disguised themselves as gendarmes, and brought to the prison a forged order that Medvèdiev should be handed over to them and taken for examination to the office of the gendarmerie. But either in consequence (as the two asserted) of treachery, or else because the prison staff saw something suspicious about the supposed gendarmes, they were arrested on the spot. Yatzevitch was arrested at the same time, he being on the watch outside, ready to assist the flight of the others; and soon afterwards Yefremov and some others involved in the affair were also captured. In the subsequent trial Yefremov was condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, and Berezniàk had a like penalty; these two and Yatzevitch were sent at once to Kara. Medvèdiev was treated differently: he was condemned to death and the sentence modified to lifelong penal servitude; but as attempts to rescue him were dreaded he was kept closely guarded in first one, then another West Siberian prison, was then taken to the Alexei-Ravelin in Petersburg, and was only brought to Kara in 1884. He was a man of consummate bravery, who literally despised danger, and was always ready to embark on the most perilous adventure. He had been a postillion, and had only received a scanty education at an elementary school; but by his own exertions while in prison he had gained quite a respectable amount of knowledge. He was particularly clever with his fingers, and performed some really astonishing feats. While imprisoned in Petersburg he secretly modelled a statuette in bread, which, when it was eventually discovered by the gendarmes, evoked great admiration from the commandant of the fortress and other officials, so marvellously was it executed. Thanks partly to this achievement, he was afterwards granted a special order modifying his sentence of lifelong "katorga" to a term of twenty years, upon which he was sent to Kara. There he became an adept in various handicrafts; he was

an excellent tailor, shoemaker, engraver, and sculptor; and afterwards, when he was living "free" in exile, he became a watchmaker and goldsmith. Unfortunately soon after he left the prison he fell a victim to alcoholism, to which he had an inherited predisposition; all attempts at reclaiming him were vain, and in a few years he was beyond hope.

Just about the time of the attempted rescue at Khàrkov the revolutionists in Petersburg were put into a state of frightful excitement by other events. A number of those condemned in the "Case of the 193" were awaiting, in the Peter and Paul fortress, their transportation to Siberia; and in consequence of the vexatious and cruel treatment to which they were subjected, they had recourse to a hunger-strike, which, as most of them had already suffered years of imprisonment while still on remand, might easily have proved fatal to their enfeebled constitutions. After the strike had lasted some days, the society *Zemlyà i Vòlya* (Land and Liberty) became aware of what was going on, and one of its members, Kravtchinsky,[1] a former lieutenant in the artillery, declared at once that he would avenge his comrades by killing General Mèzentzev, the chief of gendarmerie, the man who was chiefly responsible for the persecution of the "politicals." This deed he wished to undertake single-handed and openly without troubling about safety for himself, like Vera Zassoùlitch, who on January 24th, 1878, had fired at General Trepòv, Governor of Petersburg.[2] Many of Kravtchinsky's comrades—myself among the number—opposed his resolve. Mèzentzev was not worth such a sacrifice, and we insisted that if the attempt were made it should be in such a manner as to make possible the escape of the perpetrator. To this end General Mèzentzev's doings were carefully observed that we might ascertain his hours of coming and going; and close to his dwelling a carriage was constantly stationed

[1] Better known in England as Stepniak.—*Trans.*

[2] For having ordered the flogging of a political prisoner.—*Trans.*

with the famous trotter Barbar, who had already saved one life—that of Prince Peter Kropotkin in his escape from the prison hospital in 1876. One day in August, 1878, Mèzentzev was stabbed in one of the busiest streets of Petersburg, and, thanks to the speed of Barbar, Kravtchinsky and his companion Barannikov got away safely. Subsequently a great number of persons were arrested on account of this deed, among others, Adrian Mihaïlov, who was accused of acting as coachman. He was sentenced to twenty years' "katorga," and was for some time my room-mate at Kara.

Adrian Mihaïlov was another very talented member of our company. He had a thirst for knowledge, and a really remarkable memory. He had been a medical student, knew a great deal of natural science, and had dipped into various other branches of learning. We called him "the living encyclopædia," and it was popularly supposed that there was hardly a question he could not answer. He could always give the date of any historical event, seemed to remember everything he read, and easily made himself at home in the most difficult subjects. He was resolute, inflexible, and energetic; and his mental superiority gave him an immense influence over his companions.

Finally, I must mention Yemelyànov,[1] one of those concerned in the assassination of Alexander II. As is well known, the Tsar was killed by a bomb thrown under his carriage by Grÿnevitsky.[2] Besides that youth and Russakov, who was brought to the scaffold, Yemelyànov was also directly accessory to the deed. He was standing close by when the explosion took place, with another bomb in readiness, but did not need to make use of it, seeing that the Tsar had already met his fate. He was arrested soon after, and with ten others was condemned to death in the "Trial of the Twenty." The death-sentence was, how-

[1] See portrait, p. 209.

[2] Grÿnevitsky himself was killed by the explosion.—*Trans.*

ever, only carried out in the case of Suhànov, an officer of marines, that of the others being commuted to penal servitude for life. Yemelyànov and his companions were imprisoned in the Fortress of Peter and Paul. He was to have been sent to Schlüsselburg when the new fortress there was completed, but owing to his being seized by serious illness this was not done, and instead he was sent to Kara in 1884. He was the son of a sacristan of the Orthodox Church, had attended a school of handicraft, and had later been sent at the State's expense to Paris, where he sang as a chorister in the chapel of the Russian Embassy. When a youth of twenty he had returned to Russia, and associated himself with the Terrorists. He possessed considerable intelligence, and had gradually acquired a fair amount of information, self-taught. When I became acquainted with him he was a disillusioned sceptic, and spoke ironically of revolutionary ideas. Like Fomitchov and one or two others, he had become an admirer of Russian imperialism, and he reaped the reward of his opinions; but of that later.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE WOMEN'S PRISON

I COME now to the most tragic time of my imprisonment and the saddest of my recollections, a series of events in connection with our unhappy fellow-sufferers in the women's prison. We were always well instructed as to how our ladies were faring, for in spite of all the measures taken to prevent it, letters continually passed between us. Concerning the subject of the following narrative I also learned many additional details later from some of our women comrades.

When I first came to Kara ten women "politicals" were imprisoned there, one of whom—Lèbedieva—died soon after my arrival. The most remarkable among those remaining was Sophia Löschern von Herzfeld. She was the daughter of a general, and her relations belonged to the Court circles in Petersburg. She joined the Propagandist movement in the early sixties, and lived among the peasants, dressed like one of themselves, trying to diffuse the ideas of "peaceful" Socialism, if I may so call it. She was arrested, endured four years' imprisonment while still under examination, and was at last banished to Siberia in the "Case of the 193." The efforts of one of her relatives, a lady in the Tsaritsa's household, procured her pardon, and in 1878 she was released from prison, at which time I made her acquaintance in Petersburg. But she was not allowed to enjoy her liberty for long; a year later she was arrested in Kiëv, and resisted capture

ANNA KORBA

ELIZABETH KOVALSKAYA

NADYESHDA SIGIDA

MARIA KOVALEVSKAYA

NADYESHDA SMIRNITSKAYA

SOPHIA BOGOMOLETZ

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"with weapons in her hand." She was brought before a court-martial, together with Ossinsky and Voloshenko; she and Ossinsky were condemned to death, and he paid the full penalty of the law, but in her case "by favour" the sentence was commuted to penal servitude for life, and she was deported to Kara in 1879. Sophia Löschern von Herzfeld was modest and even shy in manner, giving the impression of an extremely reserved character. She suffered a longer term of imprisonment than any other participant in the revolutionary movement of the early seventies.

Her friend Anna Korba[1] I had also known in Petersburg in 1879; she had then just returned from the seat of war in Turkey, where she had been nursing the wounded. She belonged to a German family named Meinhardt, naturalised in Russia, numerous members of which had filled high official positions, and she herself married a foreigner. She had been extremely active in philanthropic work, and was adored by the people of the provincial town where she lived; but she learned by bitter experience how futile, under the existing political conditions, were all attempts to effect even the smallest reforms by merely quiet educative means, and she joined the terrorist society *Narodnaia Volya* in the beginning of the eighties. It was just then that the desperate struggle of that party against the Tsar's despotic government had reached its height. Anna Korba saw her friends and comrades arrested by the dozen, sent to the scaffold, or buried alive in prison. The "white terror" raged. In 1882 the chief of the secret police, Soudyèhkin, had succeeded in capturing most of the Terrorists who still remained at large after the assault on Alexander II., and Anna Korba took up the task of continuing the struggle in company with the last remnants of the fighters. A secret laboratory for the manufacture of dynamite bombs was set up in Petersburg; this was discovered by Soudyèhkin, and in June, 1882, Anna Korba

[1] See portrait, p. 266.

was arrested, together with Gratchènsky, the officer Butzèvitch, and the married couple Prybylyev. Next spring she was tried with sixteen others, and sentenced to twenty years' penal servitude.

Anna Korba was a highly educated woman, in character courageous, even-tempered, and persevering. She holds the same views to-day as when she first threw herself into the fight, and this unswerving faith in her cause impresses with respect even people who cannot share her opinions.

Before I proceed to describe the other inmates of the women's prison, I must digress for a moment to relate an incident which in its time caused great excitement among the newspaper-reading public. Towards the end of February, 1881, the police of Petersburg had their suspicions directed to a certain cheesemonger's shop in that city, where something illegal was supposed to be going forward. A search-party, one member of which was an engineer of the pioneer corps, was sent to investigate, but discovered nothing of any consequence. The next day came the assassination of the Tsar, and three days after that the cheese-shop was suddenly deserted by its occupants, among whom had been a married couple calling themselves Kòbozev—peasants from the interior of Russia, according to their perfectly regular papers. The police now made a more effectual search, and found that a subterranean passage had been made from the cheese-shop to the Màlaya Sadòvaya, a street through which the Tsar often passed. This tunnel had been meant to serve as a mine for blowing up the Tsar's carriage in case the bombs had failed to do their work. It is easy to imagine what must have been the feelings of the two revolutionists who passed under the name of Kòbozev when the police made their first visit to the shop; the underground passage had then just been completed, and the cases and barrels, supposed to contain cheese, were filled with the earth that had been dug out. Had the police but lifted the straw

matting that covered them, the whole plot, like many others before, might have been doomed to failure.

The humble peasant-woman who had served in that shop was Anna Yakìmova. She was the daughter of a priest, and had been a village schoolmistress. Like so many others, she had gone "among the people," and had been one of the accused in the "Case of the 193"; she was acquitted, but was nevertheless sent by administrative order to a forlorn spot in the north of Russia, whence in 1879 she escaped and came to Petersburg, where I made her acquaintance. Subsequently she joined the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*, and took an active part in a series of attempts against the life of the Tsar. She had helped Zhelyàbov and others in 1879 to undermine the station at Alexandròvskaya, through which the Tsar was expected to pass. After many escapes she was eventually arrested, and condemned to death in the "Trial of the Twenty"; but her sentence was commuted, she was imprisoned in the Fortress of Peter and Paul, and sent to Kara in 1884. I need hardly say that Anna Yakìmova was a person of strong-willed and determined character; all the women who took part in our movement of the seventies were of one type in that respect, and eminently so Praskòvya Ivanòvskaya and Nadyèshda Smirnìtskaya, (both sentenced in 1883,) who, with Yakìmova, formed a little group by themselves in the Kara prison. They had been friends of old, shared the same opinions, and were similar in tastes and temperament.

Besides these, Elizabeth Kovàlskaya,[1] Sophia Bogomòletz,[1] and Elena Rossikòva,[2] all of whom were brought to Kara in 1885, and Maria Kalyùshnaya—who, it will be remembered, had travelled thither with Tchuikòv and myself—completed the number of our women "politicals."

These inmates of the women's prison constituted in a certain sense the *élite* of our band; for while in the men's prison a great number were mere boys whose opinions

[1] See note, p. 189 *et seq.* [2] See page 192.

were scarcely formed, and who only languished in Siberia because of senseless persecutions under martial law, the women were without exception tried and convinced adherents of the revolutionary movement, whose sentiments and ideas were fixed once and for all. In Russia alone has the historical development of events induced so great a number of women belonging to the upper classes of society to leave the circles in which they were born, in order to aid in freeing a nation from political slavery.

Conditions of life in the women's prison were on the whole a little better than in ours. Above all, each had a cell to herself—small, dark, and damp, it is true, but this spared them the most irksome of our trials, that absence of quiet which made our existence so hard to bear. They could enjoy companionship if they so desired, as a large common room was also provided for them, and the doors of the cells were left open by day; but whenever they pleased they could isolate themselves. They were better provided with material comforts than we were, for they received more money from their relations; and they could even occasionally contribute to our exchequer. Then, of course, they had not to submit to the barbarous process of head-shaving; they might wear their ordinary clothes, and the staff generally abstained from teasing them with petty restrictions. But the peculiar characteristics of these women, their whole mode of thought, their inflexibility of purpose,—which under such conditions inevitably develops into contrariety of temper,—led to a series of conflicts between themselves as well as with the authorities. There was no unity of principle among them in their attitude towards the prison rules. Whilst Sophia Bogomòletz, Maria Kovalèvskaya, and Elena Rossikova regarded it as a part of their political programme, to which they conscientiously adhered, that they should maintain a continual feud with the staff about any and every possible circumstance, the others held that conflicts should not be needlessly provoked. These differences of opinion caused

frequent friction, and personal relations between the prisoners were occasionally somewhat strained.

In the spring of 1887 Maria Kovalèvskaya was brought from Irkutsk to Kara. She arrived just at a time when the disputes in the women's prison had become unbearable; and shortly afterwards Sophia Löschern von Herzfeld, Anna Korba, Anna Yakimova, and Paraskova Ivanòvskaya petitioned the commandant to separate them from the others, their request being granted. At the same time, in consequence of some squabble with the staff, Sophia Bogomoletz and Elena Rossikòva were removed to another prison; there were, therefore, for some time only four women in the prison at Ust-Kara—Kovàlskaya, Kovalèvskaya, Kalyùshnaya, and Smirnitskaya.

Early in 1888 the Governor-General, Baron Korf, came to visit the prisons of Kara. When he arrived with his suite at the women's prison Elizabeth Kovàlskaya was sitting on a bench out in the open air, and as the Governor-General came up to her she remained quietly seated, vouchsafing him not a glance. He addressed her harshly, saying that in his presence she ought to stand up, that he was the highest official in the district.

"I did not elect you to that position," replied Kovàlskaya calmly, and remained as before.

The functionary was beside himself with rage, and informed the commandant that he would send written instructions how to deal with this refractory prisoner; so shortly afterwards there came an order to send Kovàlskaya to the central prison in Verkhny-Udinsk, "because by her unruly behaviour she had a demoralising influence on the other prisoners in Ust-Kara."

Kovàlskaya's friends asserted that she had purposely provoked the conflict in order to effect her removal to another prison, so hateful had the sojourn in Kara become to her. The Governor-General's order would therefore have been most welcome to her; but the stupid,

cowardly commandant Masyukov supposed otherwise, and took it into his head that she and her companions would offer resistance. He thereupon came to the idiotic and inhuman decision that the delinquent should be conveyed away secretly. Early one morning, while the prisoners still slept, gendarmes accompanied by ordinary convicts burst into her cell, seized on the sleeping Kovàlskaya, and dragged her, clad only in her nightdress, to the office, where she was ordered to dress and make ready to start for her new place of confinement. Naturally the unfortunate lady screamed when aroused so rudely from her sleep, and the other prisoners waking up sprang from their beds and were witnesses of the inexplicable and insulting treatment to which their comrade was subjected. They could imagine nothing else but that a common assault on her honour was meditated, and their fury against the commandant knew no bounds.

For a long time only uncertain rumours about these events reached our ears, for our secret post was not working regularly at the time. We were first supplied with exact tidings through Golubtsòv, the sergeant of the guard, in a very unusual way. This honest fellow, Golubtsòv, who could hardly read and write, was a very important personage in our prison. He was a remarkably sensible, clever, and tactful man; his relations with the "politicals" during a long course of years and under different commandants had taught him a great deal, and he thoroughly understood our way of looking at things. He was thus enabled to avoid rubs and disputes, and we were always on the best of terms with him; this strengthened his position, and with his good sense and tact gave him the upper hand over the stupid and inexperienced Masyukov. The wise sergeant, in fact, was the presiding genius of the place, and ruled the commandant completely.

When the Governor-General's order arrived, and Masyukov in his foolish shortsightedness evolved his plan of

carrying off Elizabeth Kovàlskaya, Golubtsòv warned him what would be the consequences; but for once no heed was paid to his advice, and it was only when the women prisoners started a hunger-strike as a protest against their comrade's treatment that the commandant sought counsel from his subordinate. Golubtsòv advised him to lay the matter before the "politicals" in the men's prison, and ask us to intervene. This was the more natural and reasonable, because one of our number, Kalyùshny, had a wife and a sister among the strikers. He had been a student in the University of Khàrkov, was an intelligent, high-spirited young man, a charming companion, and a great favourite among us. He was a Terrorist, had been sentenced in 1888 to fifteen years' "katórga," and with him his wife, Nadyèshda Smirnitskaya. Maria Kalyùshnaya, my companion on the journey to Kara, was his sister, and both these ladies had witnessed the alarming scene which had led to the desperate protest they were now making. These facts suggested to the wise sergeant his plan, and he advised Masyukov to appoint Kalyùshny as intermediary in the affair. Masyukov was sensible enough to agree; he had Kalyùshny brought to his house, and told him straightforwardly all that had taken place, ending with the information that Kalyùshny's wife, his sister, and Maria Kovalèvskaya, had been refusing food for several days. He then begged Kalyùshny to go to Ust-Kara, pacify the women, and induce them to give up their hunger-strike, promising beforehand that he would do anything in reason to give them satisfaction. Kalyùshny said to us afterwards that he was sure the unlucky commandant really regretted his conduct in the affair.

Kalyùshny told Masyukov he must consult his comrades before undertaking the mission, and asked that we might be allowed to take counsel together. This was agreed to, and we all met to consider and discuss the circumstances —a thing that had not been heard of in Kara since the prison had been put under the gendarmerie. The tidings

given us by the unhappy husband and brother regarding the hunger-strike of the women moved us deeply. When he ceased speaking a stillness as of death reigned over our gathering, and then the usually silent Yatzèvitch began the debate. Without much discussion we decided that another delegate must accompany Kalyùshny, and that they should try to prevail on the women to desist from their protest, assuring them that we should ourselves now take over the arrangement of the business with Masyukov. To the commandant we declared that he must apologise to the three ladies.

It was arranged that our two delegates should be taken to the women's prison, fifteen versts (about ten miles) distant, accompanied by gendarmes, though all this was entirely against the regulations.

When they returned from their mission, and we had assembled to hear the result, they told us that the famishing women absolutely refused to be contented with an apology from the commandant. They all three declared that they would only desist from their protest if Masyukov were withdrawn from Kara.

The majority of us—myself among the number—saw at once that this was an impossible demand. The reactionary Government, with Count Dmitri Tolstoi at its head, would never recall the commandant, even if all the "politicals" in Siberia starved themselves to death; but we thought we might perhaps find a way out of the difficulty if we could induce the commandant to ask of his own accord to be transferred elsewhere on some pretext or other. To this the commandant on his side, and the ladies on theirs, consented; but the latter insisted positively that if Masyukov had not taken his departure within a certain fixed period of some months, they would again refuse food and persist in their protest to the bitter end.

This, as might readily be foreseen, meant merely a postponement of the question. But I must return for the present to our own affairs in the men's prison.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE "COLONISTS"—FURTHER EVENTS IN THE WOMEN'S PRISON — THE HUNGER-STRIKES — THE YAKUTSK MASSACRE

THE summer of 1888 brought troubles also to us in the men's prison, though they had nothing to do with the grievances of the women.

Among the inmates of the "hospital" room was Vlastòpoulo, formerly an officer in the army, condemned in 1879 to fifteen years' "katorga," this sentence having been subsequently increased to the life-term, in punishment for an attempt at escape. He was a man of many gifts and well equipped with varied information, firm in character, very proud and ambitious; and he was held by us to be unalterably fixed in his terrorist principles. His comrades placed great confidence in him, and esteemed him highly, as they testified by twice electing him *stàrosta*.

In the spring of this year (1888) Vlastòpoulo's roommates, of whom I was one, noticed that he was becoming short-tempered, peevish, and restless. About this time we were visited by an official of the Imperial Police Department—one Russìnov by name, a privy councillor. Tours of inspection were often made by high officials from Petersburg, and had for their real object the inciting of political prisoners to "repentance," and the urging them to sue for pardon. These efforts were sometimes successful. Weak-minded people were occasionally found who would sing, "Pater, peccavi"; but it is worthy of note

that such instances never occurred among the women "politicals."

On this occasion we were unaware that Councillor Russìnov had made proposals of recantation to any repentant souls among us; but one morning, shortly after his departure, Vlastòpoulo left the prison in the company of gendarmes, handing to one of the comrades as he passed through the door a note, which when read aloud, left us all perfectly thunderstruck. Vlastòpoulo informed us that he had lost all faith in the justice of the revolutionary struggle, and had therefore resolved to "cast himself at the foot of the throne," as he expressed it, *i.e.* to petition the Tsar for pardon.

No previous occurrence of the kind had been at all like this, and the impression on us was overwhelming. Vlastòpoulo was, as I have said, a most prominent person in our ranks, and his example might well be followed by others, especially considering the frame of mind in which many of the prisoners were known to be.

This was, as I have explained, a time of thorough-going reaction in Russia. Sufficient news penetrated the walls of our prison to convince us that there was at the moment no hope whatever of any definite immediate success in the revolutionary movement; and the fact of this being so necessarily caused much brooding over gloomy and even desperate thoughts, to which in prison one is but too prone. If some among us were already troubled by feelings of disillusion and doubts of the validity of our ideal, a further piece of news which arrived at this juncture—totally unexpected and at first incredible—would naturally only serve to heighten dismay. The rumour reached us that Leo Tihomìrov, one of the best-known leaders of the *Naròdnaia Vòlya*, had become a renegade. This man, whom chance alone had saved from death on the scaffold, had fled from Russia in 1882; and it proved to be true that in 1887 he had written the pamphlet, *Why I Ceased to be a Revolutionist*, in which he forswore

his former convictions, and by which he gained the Tsar's pardon. He received permission to return to Russia, and henceforth devoted his pen to the service of the existing Government, of which he is to this day a supporter.

This instance of apostasy—unique in the history of the Russian revolutionary movement—made the deepest impression throughout all Russia. "If such a man as Tihomìrov has become a monarchist, and acknowledges the absolute power of the Tsar, why then I, poor sinner, can be a revolutionist only through a misunderstanding," I heard one of the foremost among us say; and, in fact, he himself soon afterwards sent in a petition for pardon. Our worst fears were realised. Nine men in all followed the example of Vlastòpoulo; among the number Yemelyànov, who had held a bomb in readiness to throw at Alexander II., and Posen, whose monarchist infatuation I have already mentioned. Of course, all this had a most overwhelming and depressing effect upon us.

The authorities always took care that anyone who had petitioned for pardon should at once be removed from our midst and interned outside the prison until orders arrived from Petersburg. Naturally we ourselves instantly broke off all relations with such a person, which often occasioned very affecting scenes. The action of sending in a petition of the kind we termed "asking to be sent to the colony"; and to this day the word "colonist" has a sinister sound in Siberia, bearing the implication of "renegade."

Meanwhile the fight in the women's prison was not at an end, but raged more fiercely than ever. Four other women who had been brought to Ust-Kara joined in the protest of Elizabeth Kovàlskaya's three friends. The authorities did not seem inclined to move Masyukòv; and the truce having expired, the women resolved to carry out their threat, and again began a hunger-strike. When we learned this, we decided that we too must associate ourselves with them in their protest, and we refused to take food, declaring that we did so to show our solidarity with

our women comrades, though in our own opinion the commandant's apology had been a sufficient atonement for his offence.

Our prison now presented an unwonted appearance; all work was suspended, the chest that served as our larder remained closed, the kitchen stood empty, and about the yard wandered the prisoners, who for days ate nothing, but in whom no signs of yielding could be discerned; it was easier for us to starve than to eat, while we knew that our women comrades were suffering the pangs of hunger.

We made no announcement of our proceedings to the commandant, and he also preserved silence until the third day, when he sent for our *stárosta* to know why we were on strike. When our reasons were given him he asked the *stárosta* to inform us, as well as the women, that he really was soon to leave the place; he had just sent in an application to be relieved of his post, and had received a favourable answer. In proof of this he showed a telegram relating to the matter.

We succeeded in persuading the women to give in for the time and to take nourishment, they having now fasted for eight days; but they would not entirely forego their protest against Masyukov, only modifying it so far as simply to "boycott" him. Ever since the abduction of Elizabeth Kovàlskaya the commandant had been afraid of appearing in their sight; but now they determined to break off even indirect communication with him. This decision cost them perhaps the heaviest sacrifice they could have made: it meant that they refused to accept their mails, which had always to pass through the hands of the commandant, so that they received neither money nor letters. Consequently they were forced to subsist on the prison rations alone, all communication with their friends was stopped, and all tidings of the outer world that they could have obtained from newspapers were lost to them. The natural result was that in a very short time the poor women began to suffer greatly, both physically

and mentally, and that some of them were well-nigh driven to despair. The commandant was obliged to send back whence they came all letters addressed to the women prisoners. The alarm of their relations and friends at getting no news and receiving back their own letters unopened may well be imagined; and the knowledge of the suffering thus caused to their dear ones was an added misery for the captives.

She who suffered most in this terrible ordeal was Nadyèshda Sigida, one of the latest arrivals in Ust-Kara. I never knew her personally, but from all I heard of her from her friends she must have been a very sensitive young creature, gentle, affectionate, and attracted by all that is good and beautiful. She was deeply attached to her family, who lived in Taganrock, a small town in South Russia. Before her marriage she had been a teacher in a school, and her whole heart had been in her profession; she had taken but little direct part in the revolutionary movement, and had been condemned to eight years' penal servitude because a secret printing-press and some bombs had been found in the house inhabited by herself and her husband. The latter had been condemned to death, the sentence being afterwards commuted to penal servitude for life, and he had died on his way to the island of Saghalien. Fate had dealt hardly with the poor woman: she herself had been unjustly sentenced, she had lost a beloved husband, and she had arrived at the Siberian prison at a juncture when she was obliged to take part—almost involuntarily—in the drama I am now describing. The stoppage of all communication with home must have been especially cruel to her; her longing for her mother, brothers, and sisters made her nearly desperate, as she pictured their feelings on receiving back their unopened letters to her.

There seemed no way out of this terrible *impasse*. A year had gone by since Kovàlskaya's departure, and Masyukov was still commandant. The women, in a state

of desperation, declared at last that they could bear the position of affairs no longer, and would put an end to it, cost what it might. They consulted together, and again resolved to fast, so they set up a hunger-strike for the third time.

"Will it be any good?" Sigida asked herself. The authorities seemed determined not to yield; the hunger-strike had led to nothing hitherto, and would probably once again prove a fruitless undertaking; would it not be better that one victim should pay for all? Better that one alone should suffer, than that all should sacrifice themselves. Sigida resolved to save her companions.

One day she told the gendarme on duty that she wished for an interview with the commandant, and asked to be taken to him. Masyukov saw nothing out of the way in this request, and ordered Sigida to be brought to his office.

Some of us were witnesses that day of a strange scene, which could be followed by looking through the crevices in the stockade surrounding our yard. A carriage brought a young lady, attended by two gendarmes, to the commandant's house; she entered, and shortly after the commandant, in a state of great excitement, jumped out of the window into the yard bareheaded, and ran away. The young lady soon appeared in front of the house, and spoke with evident earnestness and decision to the gendarmes; after which she began talking quietly with a warder's children, and caressing them. All this seemed most enigmatical; we gathered little save that the young lady had insisted on having a telegram despatched. But the solution soon followed. We learned that when Sigida came face to face with the commandant she struck him a blow, saying, "That is for you as commandant!" and our hero, despite the presence of the gendarmes, took to his heels and fled, leaping out of the window as we had seen. Sigida, afraid that Masyukov would try to hush up the affair, had thereupon demanded that the occurrence should be telegraphed at once to the proper authorities. She was

counting on the usual procedure in such a case; an officer receiving a personal injury from one of his charges being generally removed from the place where such a thing had happened, and the offender sentenced to death. Her calculations as to these probable results of her action proved false, however; the poor lady had offered her sacrifice in vain.

I must here pause to speak of other events, which, though not directly bearing on these struggles at Kara, yet greatly influenced the minds of those concerned in them. The year of which I speak, 1889, will never be forgotten by those who were then in Siberia. The news of the sanguinary scenes that took place in Yakutsk was told to the whole civilised world, and everywhere aroused horror at the cruelty of the Tsar's Government; yet probably but few of my readers will recollect the particulars.

There were at that time interned in Yakutsk some young men and girls who were to be deported still further northward, "by administrative methods," to those wretched forlorn hamlets that figure on the map of Siberia as Verkhny-Kolymsk, Nijni-Kolymsk, Verchoyansk, and so on. Among these young people, who of course belonged to the student class, there were boys and girls under age, to whose charge even Russian law could lay no crime.

The Vice-Governor, Ostàshkin, who was then in command of the province of Yakutsk, had given orders that these exiles should be conveyed to their appointed destinations in a manner that would have rendered the hardships of the journey quite unnecessarily severe; and when the young people learned this they made representations to the authorities, pointing out the danger that threatened them of perishing by cold and hunger on the way. They were told to come together to talk matters over, and they accordingly assembled in a dwelling-house to await the arrival of the chief of police; instead of whom, however, came an order to betake themselves at once to the police office. They now felt convinced that they were to be

deported at once, without time for protest, and they refused to obey; whereupon there arrived immediately a troop of soldiers commanded by an officer, and a frightful scene began that beggars all description. The soldiers clubbed the exiles with the butts of their rifles, stabbed at them with bayonets, and fired on the defenceless assembly. Six corpses were left on the spot, among them that of a pregnant woman, and many were severely wounded. The wounded and injured — numbering twenty-seven — were then thrust into prison; and a court-martial was opened, wherein three persons were condemned to death and executed in Yakutsk, and nineteen were sentenced to penal servitude for life. That is briefly the history of the "Massacre of Yakutsk."[1]

We in Kara received the news of these horrors just when our own situation was becoming critical. Sympathy with the innocent victims and anger against their oppressors were mingled with apprehensions for ourselves; for we naturally thought, "If the Government can treat so barbarously harmless people who are not convicts, what may be done to us, 'deprived' as we are 'of all rights,' convicts in a prison whence tidings need never penetrate to the outer world?"

After events justified these fears.

[1] The Yakutsk massacre has lately (April, 1903) been recalled to public memory by the arrest of the Russian revolutionist, Michael Gotz, in Italy, and the attempt of the Russian Government—fortunately frustrated—to obtain his extradition. Gotz was one of the youthful exiles at Yakutsk, and was severely wounded, but survived to be court-martialled and condemned to penal servitude in the mines for life. He and his comrades were subsequently amnestied, chiefly in consequence of the notoriety given to the affair by an account of it published by the *Times* with indignant comments, which caused such feeling both at home and abroad that even the Russian Government was affected.—*Trans.*

CHAPTER XXVIII

OUR CELEBRATION OF THE CENTENARY OF THE FRENCH REVOLUTION—SERGIUS BOBOHOV—THE END OF THE TRAGEDY

AMONG my recollections of the year 1889, one pleasant memory remains to me—how we commemorated the hundredth anniversary of the storming of the Bastille. While the French nation, amid fervent rejoicings, celebrated the centenary of their great Revolution, a handful of convicts, imprisoned by the Russian despot in a barren wilderness of the Far East, took their share in the festival. Ours was truly but a modest ceremonial—no banquet, no toasts, no speeches. Tea and a cake provided at the common expense were all that we could afford; and our banqueting hall was the prison-yard, whither all the tables from our cells were carried for a public feast. There we sat, and thought of the great triumph of the Revolution, and of its heroes—the spiritual heroes of the civilised world.

"Will the day ever come when the people will demolish our Bastilles—the Fortress of Peter and Paul, Schlüsselburg, the Citadel of Warsaw, and all the other gaols in which Tsarism imprisons its foes?" we asked ourselves; "and will any of us be still alive then?"

"The battle for freedom will have been fought and won by the beginning of the twentieth century," our optimists averred.

"Who knows if it will ever take place?" said the sceptics.

The subject was argued over and discussed up and down. Many who then were full of hope now rest in their graves; others languish to this day in Siberian deserts.

I return to the sorrowful events that were then happening in Kara. After Sigida's assault upon the commandant the women began their hunger-strike, their third and most terrible. They adhered resolutely to their decision; Masyukov must go, if it cost them their lives. For sixteen days they abstained from food. Sigida, it was asserted, remained fasting for twenty-two days, and when the prison doctor reported that he could not answer for her life, the Governor sent an order that she was to be fed artificially. Whether the doctor carried out that instruction I do not know. A rumour came to us during those dreadful days that he had had a scene with Maria Kovalèvskaya: he went—it was said—into her cell one day, when she was lying on her bed, exhausted by hunger; and she, supposing he had come to administer nourishment to her forcibly, struck him in the face. The doctor, a rather humane kind of man, seems to have looked on this simply as the act of an invalid not properly responsible for her actions; he told her she was doing him an injustice,—that he was not going to touch her,—whereupon she begged his pardon. He said to his friends afterwards that he had never seen a woman with such strength of character, so spirited and eloquent as she.

When it became evident that these women, who were already at death's door, would never give in, the higher authorities consented to the following compromise: Masyukov could not be removed, lest it should be said that the prisoners had forced such a step on them, but the Governor should arrange that Sigida, Kalyùshnaya, Kovalèvskaya, and Smirnitskaya should no longer be under the commandant, but should be removed to the female criminals' prison, and treated in future as ordinary convicts. Our comrades agreed to this, and ceased their

hunger-strike. But the martyrdom of the unhappy women was not yet accomplished, worse sufferings still were in store for them.

In the second half of October Masyukov, who had kept in the background since Sigida's encounter with him, entered our prison one day surrounded (as had never before been the case) by a guard of armed soldiers. The man looked thoroughly shaken and upset; he sheltered himself behind the soldiers, and told us to come and listen to an order from the Governor-General. When we had all assembled in the corridor he read aloud with trembling voice a document saying that in consequence of the disturbances among the political prisoners in Kara the Governor-General warned us that on any repetition of such occurrences the most stringent measures would be taken against us, and that recourse would even be had to corporal punishment.

Now the "politicals" had had much to bear, but had never been legally liable to personal chastisement; the mere threat was held by many as an insult only to be wiped out with blood, and this view was voiced by Sergius Bobohov. I have not hitherto mentioned this excellent man; for the part that he played, and that gives him a place in the annals of the Russian revolutionary movement, only began with this challenge from the Siberian satrap.

Sergius Bobohov was born in the Volga district. He had studied in the Petersburg veterinary college, and had been expelled towards the end of the sixties for taking part in a riot of the students directed against Professor Zion, an affair that made a good deal of stir at the time. He was subsequently banished by "administrative methods" to the government of Archangel, and in 1878 attempted unsuccessfully to escape. When he was recaptured he fired a revolver-shot in the air, hoping that this would cause him to be brought to trial, and that so he might have an opportunity of denouncing the arbi-

trariness of the so-called "administrative methods." For this shot he was sentenced to twenty years' "katorga," and brought to Kara in 1879.

During the nearly thirty years of my intercourse with Russian revolutionists I have met many remarkable men, but none that lived on a higher moral plane than Bobohov. Genuine sincerity, seriousness of purpose, and boundless devotion to his ideal were his leading characteristics. He was the most modest of men, but when the honour of a revolutionist was at stake, or if it were a question of duty, he would undergo a transformation and become a fiery and inspired prophet. There was never the slightest contradiction between his words and his deeds, he was the most logical and consistent of men, and it was no wonder if he won universal respect and esteem in Kara, even though everyone did not share his opinions.

Bobohov was but a youth when I entered the prison, and the ideas that he had imbibed were the then prevalent, rather anarchistical views of the Buntari, to which he remained faithful all his life. Imprisonment and exile are apt to exercise a conservative influence on the mind; the opinions with which one enters prison tend to become stereotyped. Bobohov was well read, and interested himself keenly in all questions of social politics; but it happened with him as with many other intelligent men among us—he gathered from every book he read only what tended to strengthen anew the opinions he already held. He took great interest in the Social-Democratic theory, for instance, but his way of thinking prevented him from properly grasping its argument, and he was continually combating those who were attracted by it. He and I were never room-mates, but when walking in the yard I used to have endless discussions with him on this subject, and he always showed himself an exemplary debater, attentive, restrained, never ill-tempered or personal.

Bobohov took the threat of flogging more keenly to

heart than any of the others. His idea, which he at once did his best to promulgate, was that we should immediately send a telegram to the Minister of the Interior, declaring that if the threat of the Governor-General were not withdrawn we would all commit suicide; and he further demanded of us that if the minister had not yielded within a certain time, we should each in our turn, to be decided by lot, take measures to put an end to our lives.

I had an opportunity one day of speaking to him about this proposal, and I tried to convince him of its impracticability, especially arguing against his impossible notion of casting lots, which would make suicide cease to be a voluntary act, as those who had at first agreed might feel in honour bound to cast away their lives, even if when the time came they had changed their minds. Moreover, I reasoned, if we were to announce such an intention to the authorities, they would at once take steps to prevent its being carried out.

Bobohov passionately disputed my arguments. "I cling to life as much as any other man," he said. "If I am ready to face death as a means of protest, it would only be if I could reckon on others to follow my example. Without casting lots—that is, without making it a duty—there would be no sense in the undertaking; the others might draw back after I had taken my life, and my sacrifice would have been in vain, for the effect on the Government would be lacking."

The impression I gathered from the whole of this conversation with Bobohov was that life was really dear to him, and that he would not commit suicide, so that my worst fears were quieted. But his fate and that of some others of our comrades was already sealed.

Rumours reached us directly after this that, by order of the Governor-General, Nadyèshda Sigida was to be subjected to corporal punishment for assaulting the commandant. We took this rumour as quite improbable. In

all the history of our movement there had been no single instance of a woman being punished in such a manner; and among the men even, Bogolyùbov alone (sentenced to fifteen years' "katorga" on account of the demonstration in the Kazan Square of December, 1876) had suffered this indignity. And since, to avenge him, Vera Zassoùlitch had fired at and wounded Trèpov, and had been acquitted by a jury, in all the twelve years that had elapsed no attempt had ever again been made to inflict corporal chastisement on a political prisoner. Certainly it had been repeatedly threatened in cases of attempted escape; but the threat had never been carried out, only lengthened terms of imprisonment imposed. It seemed therefore impossible to believe that such treatment of a woman should be meditated. On the other hand, in view of the Yakutsk tragedy, the victims in which had been mere boys and girls, we could not but fear that the Government of the "peace-loving Tsar" would shrink from no barbarity.

Terrible days followed for us, but our uncertainty was not of long duration. In the beginning of November we learned that the Governor-General's order had actually been executed.

I find it hardly possible to describe our state of mind. It was not depression that we felt, but deep agitation and gloomy resolution. Externally we strove to preserve calm, lest the gendarmes should become suspicious.

We soon heard that Sigida had died immediately after the infliction of the punishment. Some reports said that she had succumbed to a nervous seizure; others that she had poisoned herself. And at the same time we were informed that Kovalèvskaya, Kalyùshnaya, and Smirnitskaya had taken poison, and had died in the prison infirmary.

On hearing these tidings many of our number silently resolved, without any discussion or consultation, to follow the example of the women. They got poison from outside, and determined to take it after roll-call one evening. No

one asked now who was going to join in the act, but each man who had made up his mind to it possessed himself of a portion of the opium that lay on the table in every room.

Bobohòv, during these days, had appeared calm, serious, and taciturn as ever, behaving as though nothing unusual lay before him. Kalyùshny, too, seemed long ago to have taken an unalterable decision. This decision had brought them together, and the two were now close friends.

Seventeen men—seventeen out of the nine-and-thirty that made up our number—had resolved to put an end to their lives. On the appointed day, after the evening rounds, singing was heard in the "Yakutsk room," where were Bobohov and Kalyùshny and the greater number of the others who had also determined to die, though there were some in every room—two in ours. This singing was the signal to them all. Those who were to die then took leave of their comrades and swallowed the poison.

Shortly after, they began to feel ill, with headache and great weariness, and they lay down on their beds to sleep, not expecting to wake again.

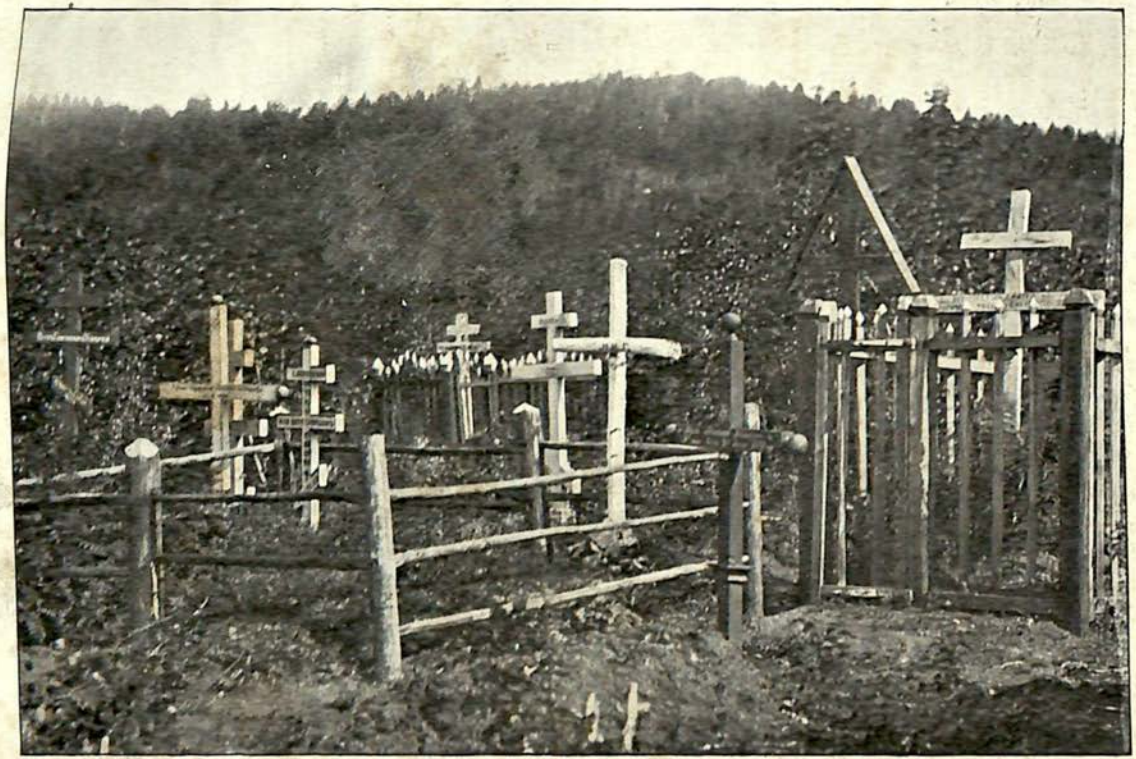
I had taken no poison, but when this general suicide began it seemed as though it would be easier to kill oneself than to witness the deed. How strong and deep was the impression made on me may be gathered from the fact that late in the night I began to suffer from severe headache and general uneasiness, and the doctor said afterwards that I had exhibited all the symptoms of poisoning.

However, our comrades had not effected their purpose. The opium was bad—either old or adulterated—and was not deadly; the unhappy men awoke next morning in great pain and distress. But the frustration of their design did not in most cases weaken their resolution. Three only abandoned the attempt; the others determined to take a more potent drug—morphia.

Next evening the farewell scenes were repeated. The

nerves of the survivors were still further tortured; our position was indeed cruel. The morphia also proved bad; most of those who had swallowed it were very ill, but eventually recovered. Bobohov and Kalyùshny, however, having each taken a treble dose, speedily became unconscious. In the night Bobohov awakened yet once again. He heard Kalyùshny's throat rattle, and tried to rouse him, embracing him, covering his face with kisses. When he saw that his friend would never wake more, he seized a whole handful of opium, swallowed it, and lying down beside Kalyùshny, closed his eyes for ever.

When the inspector and the gendarmes made their rounds the next morning, they found the two insensible. The doctor was fetched, and pronounced that the death-agony had already begun; Kalyùshny expired that evening, Bobohov not until the following morning. The corpses were removed to the mortuary, and were subsequently buried side by side with those of the four dead women.



GRAVEYARD OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AT KARA

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CHAPTER XXIX

DISQUIETING REPORTS—VISIT OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL—RELEASE FROM PRISON

THE suicide of our two comrades brought visits from various officials to the prison; first came the Public Prosecutor, then the Colonel of Gendarmerie, finally the Governor of the district. We, however, absolutely declined to enter into conversation with them, not even answering direct questions; and they left without eliciting a syllable from any of us.

No special measures were taken; everything remained as of old. Only we ourselves were as though transformed by the tragic events that had taken place; a heavy weight seemed to oppress us, our songs were hushed, jesting was at an end, we had forgotten how to laugh; games too were stopped, even chess found no devotee. Most of us still suffered acutely from shaken nerves.

So passed the winter of 1889–1890. The silence of the higher authorities was a bad sign, and we felt certain that in one way or another reprisals would be taken for the past events in Kara. The order rendering us liable to the punishment of flogging still held good, spite of the six martyrs who had gone to their death. Some of our number were terribly agitated about this during the early part of the year, and again two of our comrades determined to take their own lives in order to demonstrate to the Government that the political prisoners had not abandoned their protest against the threat. But the rest of us

persuaded them to forego their intention until the commandant (Masyukov still held this post) should have made some reply to our demands. This reply was to the effect that fresh orders had been received whereby corporal punishment for women was entirely done away with; and men were only liable to it if they did not belong to the privileged classes, and had not been educated in a gymnasium. The sacrifices had been in so far vain that the system remained; but it could be reckoned on with comparative certainty that the authorities would not again resort to such measures. So far as we were concerned we were now aware that the rules for our treatment were in any case about to be changed, and as a matter of fact this was soon the case.

For some years a report had been current that a new prison was to be built at Akatoui—a place distant some three-hundred versts from Kara,—and that the Kara prisoners would all be transported thither. It was also rumoured that in this new prison a system was to be instituted such as had never hitherto obtained in Russia.

Meanwhile our numbers had been gradually diminishing. A good many of my companions had in course of time been allowed to leave, and were living in the penal settlement; and the number of those who had begged for pardon, and who in consequence had been liberated as "colonists," was not small. Among others my friend Jacob Stefanòvitch should have been released in the spring of 1890, when his term in prison ended; but he preferred to remain with us until the question of our removal to Akatoui was settled, and found various pretexts for getting his release deferred.

During the last year we had had no new arrivals from Russia; because since the end of the eighties the Government had brought no revolutionists to trial, so that no sentences of penal servitude had been passed. Instead, a system had been introduced of sending political offenders for many years of banishment to Siberia, or to the island

of Saghalien, by "administrative methods." By the summer of 1890 most of us who still remained in our prison were already formally entitled to leave for the penal settlement, and were only unjustly detained because the number of political settlers there was limited to fifteen. I myself should have obtained release in the course of that year, but I had never expected that this would really be. From my first arrival in Kara I had resigned myself to the thought of spending my entire term of punishment in the prison; in my dreams of the future I never thought about the penal settlement, but only looked forward to the distant date when, at the expiration of my sentence, I should be allowed to live somewhere as a Siberian exile.[1] That life was depicted for me in anything but rosy colours by the letters of comrades; nevertheless I awaited with impatience the far-off day of release. Like the hero of Dostoiëvsky's *Memoirs from the Dead-house*, I often counted up how many years, months, weeks, hours, I had still to spend in prison. How wearily the time passed! The fewer grew the remaining years, the slower went the days, and freedom seemed further off than ever.

Prison life had affected me considerably in the course of time. My nerves were shattered, and I felt as though borne down by a heavy burden; my brain worked with difficulty, and my general condition was one of apathy and lassitude. The future looked black to me; I was sick of life.

In August, 1890, reports assumed a more definite form, and we learned with certainty that we were shortly to be

[1] English readers might suppose that, on the expiration of their sentences, political convicts would be set free unconditionally. But this is not the case. According to the Russian Penal Code, Art. 25, "The results of the sentence to hard labour are: the abolition of all family and property rights; and, at the expiration of the sentence, settlement in Siberia *for life*." In practice, however, "politicals" (especially those having influential friends) are occasionally, after the lapse of years, allowed to return to European Russia. There they must live under police supervision; and though they may choose their place of abode, it must be a town; but not the capital nor any of the more important or manufacturing towns.—*Trans.*

taken to Akatoui. This news excited us much, and plans for our arrangements in the new prison became the chief subject of conversation. It seemed incredible to us that the cruelty of the Government could go so far as to increase the hardships of prisoners who for the most part had already been ten years or more in captivity, and had suffered so much; yet we heard that the régime at Akatoui was to be unusually severe.

One day we learned that the Governor-General had come to Kara. We were ordered to assemble in the yard, and Baron Korf soon made his appearance, followed by a large suite, and guarded by gendarmes and soldiers. He informed us that an order had been sent from Petersburg for our removal to Akatoui. The regulations of the new prison provided that political convicts should henceforward be in exactly the same position as the ordinary criminals: we should share rooms with them, be fed in the same way. "In short," concluded the Governor-General, "in no respect will any difference be made between the two classes of prisoners, and these instructions will be carried out to the letter."

The sentences flowed smoothly from his lips, yet Baron Korf did not look altogether pleased with his mission. Upon us his words had a crushing effect; our fears were confirmed and worse, for no one had dreamt of our being placed on the footing of ordinary criminals. Above all, this meant that we should be liable to flogging, as they were.

We stood for a time speechless; partly because we were staggered by what we had heard, and partly because we had no desire to enter into conversation with the man who had degraded himself by ordering the corporal chastisement of a woman. To the repeated question whether we had anything to say, no answer was given; but Baron Korf was apparently very anxious to get into discussion with us, and the situation became rather uncomfortable. At last, as the Governor-General was preparing to leave, Mirsky suddenly

broke the silence. With formal politeness he inquired how the words "in every respect like the ordinary criminals" were to be construed, and laid stress on the fact that ordinary convicts were allowed to enter the penal settlement without any limitation of their numbers. Visibly gratified that at last he was addressed, Baron Korf hastened to explain that in this particular also there would henceforward be no difference made between the two classes. An animated conversation now ensued between him and Mirsky, in which Yakubòvitch soon joined. With excited gestures the latter began declaring that they might treat us in all other respects like criminals, but we would never endure it if one of us were flogged.

The Governor-General attempted to restore peace: we ought not to be alarmed, he said; none of us had hitherto been punished in that way, and he hoped it might never happen in the future.

I had not intended to take part in the conversation, but when I heard those words, involuntarily I cried out, "And Sigida? A woman!"

This was a subject full of the most ominous possibilities. Baron Korf began speaking eagerly; he had apparently been waiting for the chance of such an allusion, and he seemed to feel a need of justifying himself.

"What were we to do?" he cried. "Must we be insulted, and keep silence? It was not we who first resorted to personal violence."

"You could have tried her," I answered; "but you had no right to torture her."

The Governor-General stammered out a few sentences, the drift of which was that past events were irretrievable, and that he could not be held responsible for what had occurred in Kara.

It was a painful episode, and when Baron Korf had gone we returned to our cells in deep depression, feeling insulted and humiliated by the decision that we had just heard.

The day was to bring yet another excitement. The head warder, a certain Pohorukov, made the rounds as usual, accompanied by some gendarmes, and called the roll in the various rooms. I was in the corridor, meaning to go into my room along with the gendarmes; and Fomitchov also was in the corridor, standing by the door of his room. As one of the gendarmes was unlocking that door I suddenly saw something hurtle through the air, the sound of a frightful blow followed, and the head warder fell to the ground. The gendarmes instantly fled in panic, leaving the man lying unconscious on the floor; but I ran after them, calling to them not to be frightened, that they must come and help their injured companion. It was, however, some time before they could be persuaded to return.

I ought to mention here that Golubtsòv, the clever and tactful captain of the guard, of whom I spoke before, no longer held that post. When our hunger-strikes began he got himself transferred to the section for ordinary criminals, for he saw that the dispute with Masyukov was certain to cause trouble. The new captain of the guard was a stupid, cowardly fellow. When he at last recovered from his fright I managed to induce him to unlock the door of the room where Prybylyev, our physician, was, and the latter then had the wounded man carried into our "hospital" room, where he administered first aid. The head warder had received a severe blow on the head from some hard object, he was still unconscious, and it was difficult to know at first whether the wound was dangerous or not.

As the commandant was away in attendance on the Governor-General and would not return till next day, and as the head warder was *hors de combat*, we prisoners had to take command, the gendarmes, who had quite lost their heads, obeying our orders without hesitation. The first thing was to get the injured man conveyed to his own house, and Prybylyev had him carried thither on the bed

as he was. Then something must be done with Fomitchov, who himself insisted on being removed from among us; so we made the captain of the guard install him in one of the single cells in the adjacent building.

Fomitchov's act seemed absolutely inexplicable, the head warder being a quite insignificant, ordinary kind of person, about whom we had never troubled ourselves; and the only explanation that suggested itself to us was that, excited by the news we had just heard, Fomitchov must have suddenly lost his reason. For, being, as I have related, an eccentric devoted to monarchism, Fomitchov was the last person from whom such an attack on an official could have been expected, and the theory of madness seemed the more likely, as he had on one or two former occasions shown a tendency to paroxysms of rage. We were mistaken, however; next day he himself gave us the following elucidation of his motives.

Some months before, when Fomitchov was in the prison hospital, where Pohorukov was then steward, he had been witness of a shocking scene. Some ordinary criminals had been cleaning out the yard, and the steward, declaring that the work had not been done thoroughly enough, at once ordered the men to be flogged. The punishment was instantly administered, right under the window of Fomitchov's cell. Indignation and disgust had naturally been kindled in Fomitchov's bosom, and abhorrence of the man who could perpetrate such a barbarity; but it would hardly have occurred to him to attack Pohorukov without further cause. Now, however, when the Governor-General had just declared that we were to be put on an equal footing with the ordinary criminals as regards flogging, Fomitchov remembered how people could be subjected to that barbarous punishment by any stupid official for the merest trifle; he wished, therefore, he said, to avenge the deed he had witnessed, and at the same time to show what would be our proceedings if anyone ever attempted to apply such treatment to us.

Naturally we feared that the Governor-General might suppose Fomitchov's assault to have been an act resolved on by us all, and committed with our sanction, in which case reprisals could not fail to be made; we lived, therefore, for several days in a state of excited expectancy. The doctor, meanwhile, pronounced Fomitchov to be suffering from a passing disturbance of mind, caused by learning of the new decree; fortunately, too, the injured man's wound proved not to be mortal, and he recovered, only losing the hearing of one ear. The Governor-General was, I suppose, relieved to find that no more serious consequences had followed his announcement of the new order, and that may have made him take a lenient view of the case. Fomitchov was eventually placed under observation in the prison hospital, and his term of imprisonment was lengthened by two years as the penalty of his offence.

From the statement made by the Governor-General in response to Mirsky, we might conclude that none of us who had become entitled to leave prison for the penal settlement (that is, not less than twenty men) would be taken to Akatoui, and that therefore we should escape the severe régime there; but I personally could not believe that the hour of my release from prison was so near. My old experience at Freiburg had taught me how easily hopes may be falsified, and I repelled with energy every alluring vision, preferring rather to paint gloomy pictures of a future in prison among the criminal horde; and although the news soon reached us that we were indeed to be liberated—that a list had already been prepared of those persons who were entitled to leave—I could not trust myself to credit it. One day, however, quite unexpectedly, three of our number were released from prison—Luri, Rechnyevsky, and Souhòmlin, whose wives had followed them to Kara. Shortly after, Masyukov, accompanied by his newly-appointed successor, Tominin, appeared one day in our prison, and informed

us that seventeen others were to be liberated, my name figuring in the list.[1]

We packed up our belongings and took leave of our comrades, who were to go to Akatoui the next day; and the thought that our friends had before them such an increase of hardships damped our pleasure in attaining the long-desired semi-freedom. Beforehand we had pictured quite otherwise the joy of release and the scene of farewell. Now that the hour had struck it was hardly joy that I felt; on the contrary, I seemed almost to be quitting a home that had become dear to me. Not with heads uplifted, but sad and depressed, we bent our steps towards the door. The bolt flew back, and a larger company of men than had ever been seen to do so before on such an occasion left the prison for good. A trammelled and partial liberty lay before us; still, liberty it was.

[1] Among the others to be released with me were Martinovsky, Prybylyev, Mirsky, Starinkièvitch, Zlatopolsky, Mihaïlov, Fomin, and Kohn; all of whom have figured already in my narrative. Stefanòvitch also was of the party, but was only destined to remain with us for two months, after which he was sent to be interned in Yakutsk. He has spent the thirteen years since we parted in various places of Siberian exile.

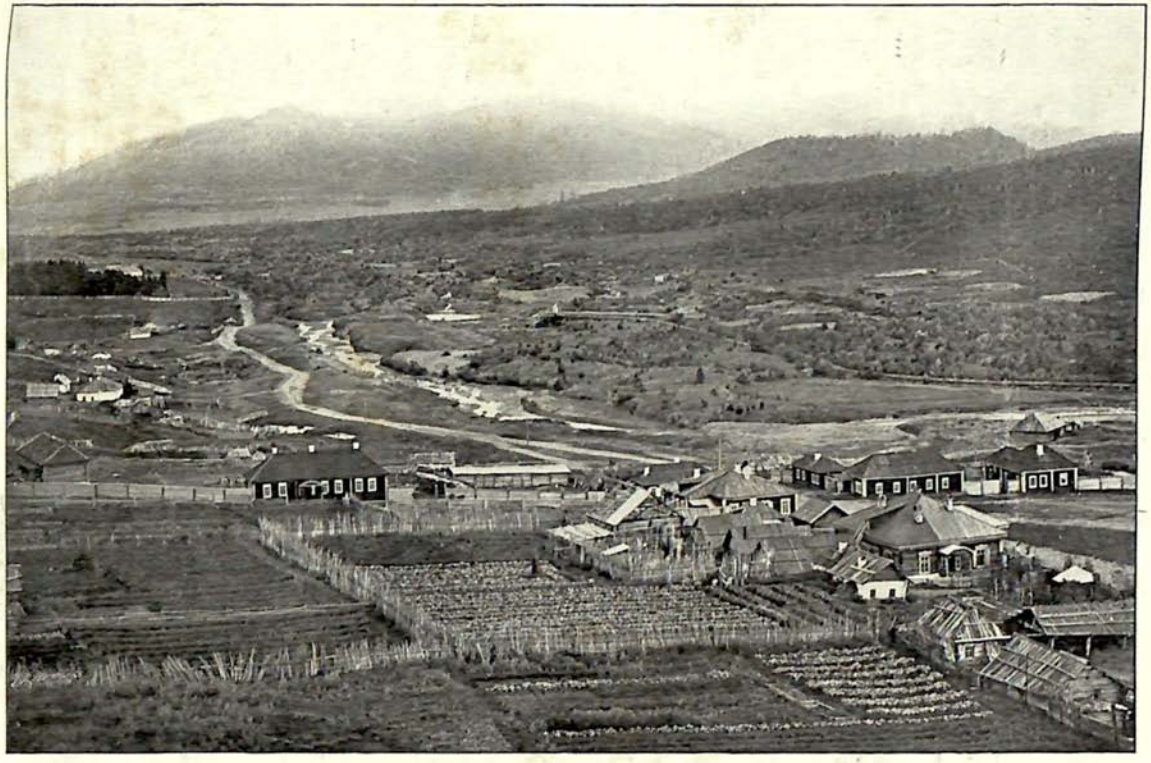
CHAPTER XXX

NIZHNAYA-KARA—NEW LIFE—STOLEN GOLD

NIZHNAYA-KARA, where the penal settlement was situated, had an appearance quite peculiar to itself. The dwelling-houses were at some minutes' distance from the prison, on a hill-slope descending to the banks of the River Kara, whose bed contains gold-dust and in summer becomes almost completely dry. The place had nothing of the Russian village about it, either in the style of its buildings or its inhabitants. The latter were mostly convicts, both men and women; besides whom there were a few peasants, descendants of former convicts, or of the crown colonists who had been settled here as drudges in the gold-workings. Then there was an infantry battalion of Cossacks stationed here for the purpose of keeping guard over the prison; and finally there were numerous prison officials and Cossack officers.

The mixed nature of the population was evidenced by the variety of their dwellings. Ordinary criminals who were unmarried lived in barracks, where the Cossacks also were housed; the officers and prison officials inhabited neat little houses belonging to the State; and the "politicals" and married criminals lived in wretched tumbledown hovels. Besides the classes already enumerated, there were three tradesmen in Kara, each of whom kept a small general shop.

At first we had great difficulty in finding accommodation; for of course it was not possible at once to run up



THE PENAL SETTLEMENT, KARA

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habitations for twenty men, all let out of prison at the same time, and we were obliged to put up with lodgings where a number of persons were crowded into each single room. In other ways too there was much inconvenience and discomfort during those early days of freedom; but on the whole our change was distinctly for the better. Merely to have got rid of the detested turnkeys was a joy; we rejoiced also at being free from the barbarous head-shaving, and we might once more wear our own clothes. We were permitted to take up some handicraft, but the exercise of the so-called "liberal professions" was forbidden us. The regulations as to our correspondence were also less severe; we could write letters to our relations, and a number of newspapers that were prohibited in prison were allowed here. But above all, we might now go about freely at all hours, and wander in the neighbourhood of the village to our heart's content.

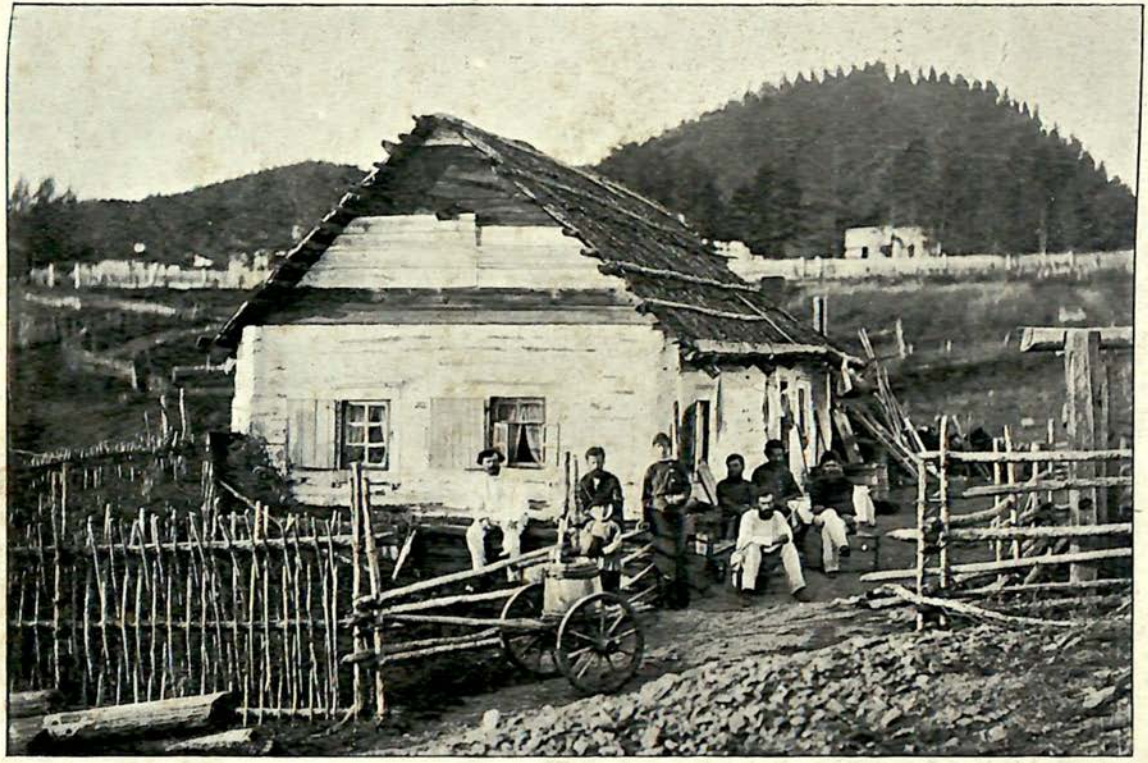
On our exit from prison we were placed under the supervision of the staff controlling the ordinary convicts, and shortly after the gendarmerie disappeared from Kara for good. Every morning a prison inspector made the rounds of the settlement with his book, which we had to sign, so that the authorities might be satisfied that none of us were missing. We were not allowed to go beyond ten versts from the village without a special permission from the superintendent—that same Pohorukov whom Fomitchov had assailed.

Our material condition was considerably more comfortable now than it had been in prison. Besides the means of livelihood that had hitherto been available—rations from the State and money sent from home—many of us could now earn something by private exertion. We still preserved our organisation as when in prison, with certain modifications rendered necessary by our new circumstances; we still formed an *artèl* and elected a *stàrosta* to arrange the details of our common life. Of course, our domestic economy had considerably extended its sphere;

we had now much to think of that had not entered into our consideration before.

Autumn brought a good deal of heavy labour for all able-bodied men. Trees had to be felled and carted to serve as winter fuel, and then the wood had to be chopped small for use. In the winter the hay needed for our cattle had to be brought in, for we possessed six cows and four horses. In the spring we looked after our gardens, and in the summer we made hay in the meadows. Cooking was still managed in common, groups of us carrying it out in turn. There was always plenty for all hands to do, and the work was often very hard. I myself found the labour of the winter season extremely severe. It meant rising at three or four o'clock in the morning to harness the horses—a task difficult and disagreeable enough always in the Siberian cold, and a perfect misery in the small hours of the morning—and then driving the sledge ten or twelve versts, loading it with hay, and finishing our job so as to return home by nightfall. Two of us at a time had to load and fetch home four great waggon-loads of hay. Naturally we were very clumsy over the unaccustomed labour, and it happened often enough that ropes would break and the hay get scattered, or that the horses would stray away. In our heavy sheepskins and felt boots we had each as much as we could manage in conducting two heavy waggons on the homeward journey; and despite the extreme cold we used often to be bathed in perspiration.

Yet the hard physical work had a charm of its own. It gave one a quite peculiar sensation to be driving along in the dark over the smooth, white surface of the snow, on and on into the depths of the forest. The profoundest silence reigned everywhere, broken by the crackling of the snow under the horses' hoofs and the runners of the sledge, and sometimes by the distant howling of a wolf. Myriads of stars sparkled in the firmament, and not a trace of man's existence was anywhere to be seen. But the cruel



COTTAGE SHARED BY "POLITICALS" IN THE KARA PENAL SETTLEMENT

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cold, increasing in severity towards dawn, would soon drive away all poetical ideas. The frost penetrated our sheepskins, and we felt as if we were being pricked all over our bodies with sharp needles. Often the brandy in our flasks would freeze, and although we took all possible precautions, the glass would split and the spirit be left in a frozen lump.

These expeditions, fortunately, were not of very frequent occurrence, the turn of each man coming only about three or four times in the course of the winter. The fetching of wood, on the other hand, was continually necessary; but although this, too, entailed considerable exertion, it was not nearly so serious an undertaking.

After a spell of hard work it used to feel luxury indeed to be back in one's own house. The little peasant hut in which I dwelt seemed a perfect palace, and I thought it most comfortable; though any spoilt child of civilisation would have seen much to be improved in it. Nearly a third of its space was taken up by a great Russian stove, which unfortunately often smoked; doors and windows shut very imperfectly; and in both floor and walls there were great cracks, through which the wind whistled everlastingly, despite my continual efforts to stop them up. But all these were petty details that could not detract from the charm of having a "home" of one's own. Only those who have themselves undergone the martyrdom of never being alone for an instant, and of feeling always conscious that the eyes of others are upon one's every action, can properly realise that charm. To have the enjoyment of that independent solitude it was worth while putting up with a number of small inconveniences that might to a certain extent have been avoided by a *ménage-à-deux*. It was only an occasional pair of bosom friends who chose to live in that fashion. Most of us much preferred to undertake singly the duties of housekeeping —stoking the stove, carrying water, cleaning, etc.

My hut, which, when I took possession of it, was in

a state of extreme disrepair, was the property of the State. With my own hands I mended it up as well as I could. It stood a little apart from the other dwellings, at the end of the village, on the slope of a hill, and close to the little cemetery. At first I used to feel some anxiety over the insecurity of the door; a push from without was sufficient to open it, and this was hardly agreeable when one knew that round about dwelt all sorts of criminals—some very queer customers among them. However, I soon found that I had no cause to fear anything from these people; and when I returned home late at night by lonely ways and bypaths, I felt as safe as in the best-policed town.

One of the most notorious criminals in the settlement was a man named Lissenko. It was reported of him that in one of his robberies he had killed a whole family—men, women, and children. He was about sixty when I first knew him, and still had the strength of a giant. He struck me as being crafty, cunning, and reckless, but not a malicious kind of fellow, and he was extremely pious withal. No one who knew him personally could easily believe him to have murdered innocent children. I was curious to learn from himself how much truth there was in the reports that were current concerning him, and I found an opportunity one day of questioning him on the subject.

"Yes, of course it's true," said he. "What about it?"

"But how could you have the heart to kill a child?" a friend of mine asked him.

"Oh, I cried all the time I was doing it, but still I killed them," was the answer. "It was just God's will. If He had not willed it I should not have been able to commit the murder; I should have been struck down myself. So it was really God who made me do it."

My friend (from whom Lissenko seemed to stand a good deal) then asked—

"Well, and would you murder me, if you met me in a safe place?"

"If I knew you had a lot of money about you I should certainly wring your neck," said the man, with cheerful frankness. "But there! one doesn't kill without some good reason!"

Lissenko was at that time carrying on a very risky illegal trade: he was a receiver of "stolen gold," and smuggled spirits. I must explain that gold could be found in considerable quantities in the neighbourhood and worked with the greatest ease. Equipped with a shovel and a wooden vessel for washing, men and women repaired to the River Kara and other neighbouring streams, and could without difficulty get gold-dust to the value of one or two roubles in a single day. Though strictly prohibited by the Government, this private search for gold is practised almost openly. Those who do not themselves look for gold yet traffic in it; and practically the entire population, except the political prisoners, is engaged in the illicit trade. Nobody—one or two really honest officials perhaps excepted—makes any scruple about infringing the law; thousands make their livelihood in this way, and many even grow rich. I knew whole families, some members of which went off as regularly every day on the quest as though it were the most lawful affair in the world. No one—not even officials—found anything to protest against in this breaking of the law; on the contrary, everyone in the place, except those few persons whose interests were concerned on the other side, looked upon it as quite natural that the gold-seekers should make the most of their labour, and take the treasure that the soil offered. No attention was paid to the arbitrary decree which declared that treasure to be the Tsar's private property—or, as it was officially expressed, "the property of His Majesty's Cabinet"; and notwithstanding the heavy expense incurred by the responsible authorities to protect the gold-fields of the district, far more gold is obtained by unlawful than by lawful means. The receivers of the stolen treasure, and other middlemen, can always find a way to convey their mer-

chandise over the border into China, where it fetches a far higher price than that given by "the Cabinet of His Majesty."

Meanwhile all authorities agree that the illicit gold-finders have conferred immeasurable benefit on the country. They are the true pioneers, who, wandering about the "Taiga" or virgin forests in all directions, seeking deposits of precious metals, are to be thanked for the discovery of numberless gold-fields—among them some of the most prolific of all. Certainly little enough profit falls to the share of the pirates themselves; most of them remain poor and needy all their lives, hardly earning their daily bread; and many of them become slaves of the middle-men. It would take me too long to describe further the lives and doings of these gold pirates; suffice it to say that they inhabit a curiously interesting little world of their own—a state within the state—with its own strictly administered laws and peculiar customs.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE TOUR OF THE HEIR-APPARENT THROUGH SIBERIA—OUR LIFE IN THE PENAL SETTLEMENT—AN INCENSED OFFICIAL

TIME passed by much faster in the settlement than in the prison. Busy with the necessary work for establishing our little community, we scarcely noticed the passing of autumn and winter. I can never forget the spring of 1891—the first I enjoyed after the long years of imprisonment; moreover, that spring brought quite unexpected hopes of favours soon to be granted us. A report reached us that the Tsar Alexander III. had decided to issue a manifesto to celebrate the treading of Siberian soil by the Heir-Apparent. This manifesto, it was said, would bring pardon to all convicts, and not even the "politicals" were to be excluded. The official telegram about this—obscurely worded though it was—could not fail to awaken in us hopes of at any rate increased liberty. If the news were correct, it was to be concluded that many of us would shortly be treated as "exiles," and no longer as convicts. This would improve our situation in a greater or lesser degree according to the locality whither we should be banished. "Politicals" are generally sent to the province of Yakutsk, where conditions of life are in many respects no better than in the settlement at Kara. It must be remembered that Yakutsk is a very sparsely populated province, and lies further from the civilised world than the Transbaikalian province in which

Kara is situated. The climate is worse than that of Kara, the winter longer; and in other ways, too, our comrades there were worse off than we. Their post arrived less often than ours, and in many parts of the Yakutsk government "luxuries," such as tea, sugar, and petroleum, are often not to be procured at all. Even stale black bread is sometimes a rarity, costing twelve to fifteen roubles the pood,[1] and is regarded as a delicacy only to be set before an honoured guest. The chief, if not the exclusive, food of the natives consists of fish and meat. The dwellings, too, are worse than the wooden huts of Kara, being simply "yurtas," *i.e.* tent-shaped hovels such as the natives live in, built of rough logs, the interstices between which are filled up with earth and turf. Yet most of us were ready to go to these inhospitable regions, for there was always the chance, when once one was numbered in the category of "exiles," that in time one might be sent to a more advantageous district. Above all, there was greater freedom; for though a place of residence is appointed for each exile, yet they may travel about in the surrounding country for considerable distances. There are more opportunities, too, of seeing people; new additions are always being made to the numbers of the "administrative" exiles in every province, and from them one learns what is going on at home; while, on the other hand, nobody fresh was sent to the penal settlement at Kara during the whole time that I was there. Finally, the exiles in Yakutsk had the prospect of yet another step in advance—they might gain permission to enrol themselves in the peasant class, and in that way win even greater facility of movement within the borders of Siberia. Things do not move very fast, and even if all goes well this favour may only be obtained after ten years' exile; but one learns patience in Siberia, and many a one will let his thoughts dwell on that distant future: "Ten years! then perhaps there will

[1] About 8½*d.* to 10½*d.* the English pound, a pood being equal to 36·1127 lbs. avoirdupois, and a rouble to about 2*s.* 1*d.*—*Trans.*

KARA PRISONERS AT WORK

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be a manifesto; and in fifteen or twenty years may come the great event—return to one's home!"

I confess that I myself indulged in such hopes, though I knew but too well how deceptive these "favours" of the Tsar might be. To the Coronation manifesto there had been attached numberless limitations and exceptions, and it was not to be expected that this time the pardon of which we had been hearing rumours would be extended to everyone. "But who knows? They have let me out of prison at last; perhaps now I shall be made an exile, unlikely though it seems!" Hope and fear alternated, and optimism gained the upper hand.

While in the Petersburg government-offices the question had to be settled as to carrying out the proclamation—who was to benefit by it, and who must be excluded from its operation—the authorities in Siberia had another care upon them: how to avert all danger from the path of the Heir-Apparent, as he journeyed through a land where dwelt so many embittered victims of Tsarism. The gentlemen of the official world solved this problem eventually in a simple fashion: all along the Prince's route we (busy with our hopes of freedom!) were to be locked up for the time being; and though Kara was a good fifty versts distant from the high-road by which the journey of state was made, we were shut up in prison the day before the Cesarèvitch[1] passed, and only set free again a day after he had got safely through our neighbourhood.

For long afterwards we awaited with the greatest excitement the advent of the post every week or ten days, always hoping that some decision as to the scope of the manifesto would arrive. But government departments take their time; those who amused themselves with thoughts of the Tsar's grace had still to endure uncertainty as best they could. A whole year elapsed before we received the long-expected news, and then it was dis-

[1] A familiar form of transliteration is employed here, but more correct would be Tsesarèvitch.—*Trans.*

appointing enough; nearly half the inhabitants of the Kara penal settlement were excepted from the operation of the manifesto, the rest had but a very short curtailment of their sentences. I was among those who got nothing at all, and was obliged to reconcile myself to the thought of another four years in Kara. It was bitter to have one's hopes thus destroyed.

It was the more bitter that our first joy over release from prison had soon worn off, and life in the settlement had now become almost as irksome as the life in prison had been. Our days seemed as monotonous and empty as ever; and while in prison one had been constrained to accept the unalleviated barrenness of life, here in the settlement one felt the tug of the chain at every turn, and chafed at it. There we had known from the first that all reasonable and profitable activity was denied us, that we were condemned to an uninteresting and aimless existence; and under such conditions one's mental alertness becomes dulled—almost atrophied. In the settlement, on the contrary, it was quite otherwise; here we were in the midst of life again, the state of lethargy that had reigned in the prison passed away; and although the pulse of life could hardly be said to beat high, yet we could see people exerting themselves, undertaking enterprises, pursuing their various interests, fighting with difficulties and dangers. We ourselves the while were restricted to the work of our narrow household economy, work which naturally could not satisfy our aspirations. Most of us yearned to set our powers to work—to do something that should call forth all our energies and capabilities, not merely to chop wood and make hay. But in this forsaken spot, and hemmed in as we were by all manner of restrictions, we could find no congenial outlet for our activities. To all appearance we were now at liberty to undertake many things that had been forbidden in prison; but this appearance was mainly illusory. It was just this contradiction between our apparent rights and our actual possibilities that galled us

FEMALE CRIMINALS AT KARA DRAWING WATER-CART

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and weighed heavy on our spirits, making us sometimes inclined to think we would almost rather return to prison, if thereby we might escape from this torment of inactivity. We found it irksome in the extreme to have to take enormous pains and waste much time over mere trifles—the details of our primitive household management—which, under the difficult conditions of our life, made exorbitant demands upon us. Especially at first, when we were new to it all, it often happened that for weeks at a time one could never take up a book or a newspaper, and for educated, intellectual men that was naturally very wearisome. The only interesting mental occupation open to us was to observe the lives of the dwellers in this strange place; as already mentioned, they were an oddly mixed lot, and we had plenty of opportunity for studying them.

I have often been in the criminal prison of Kara, and witnessed there the life of the convicts in their cells and in the workshops, as they went about their various occupations. The employment of convict labour in the gold-washing had been abandoned by that time, having been found too costly; and the convicts were occupied with so-called "domestic work." Among other things they were used in transport, to take the place of beasts of burden; and the spectacle of men—even of women—harnessed to heavy carts, and moving painfully along like oxen in a yoke, was altogether revolting.

About a year after our establishment in the settlement, convict labour in Kara was entirely given up; the convicts were taken away, some to serve in the construction of the Siberian railway, (then just begun,) some to the island of Saghalien or to other penitentiaries. With the convicts departed their guards, the Cossacks, and other officials; our settlement was well-nigh depopulated, and life became more monotonous than ever. However, one advantage ensued for us: we could use the abandoned dwellings of the officials, and so lived more comfortably henceforward. We were on the best of terms

with the few inhabitants who were left; we taught their children, assisted them with our counsel when we could, and gave them medical and legal advice. To these people a "political" seemed a compendium of learning, and they applied to us on every kind of occasion. Now it was strictly forbidden us to engage in any work that could interfere with that of practitioners of the "liberal professions"; by law we were not allowed to teach or to give medical aid; yet, circumstanced as we were, the officials themselves were not above calling for our help, notwithstanding the infringement of the law. Of course, therefore, they could not very well bring us to account for our dealings with civilians. Only on one occasion did this kind of thing lead to any unpleasantness, and I will briefly relate that occurrence.

A peasant from a neighbouring village came and laid the following case before us. One day the newly appointed *pristav* (commissioner of police) had appeared at his house with the *starosta* of the village and other officials, and without giving any reason had instituted a domiciliary search. In the larder they had found some poods of ship's biscuit, tea, tobacco, candles, and other stores, all of which the *pristav* had confiscated out of hand, on the pretext that the peasant could only have such quantities of these things in his possession in order to exchange them for "pirated gold," and that he was therefore a convicted receiver of stolen goods. Then when the peasant had attended at the house of the *pristav* in compliance with the latter's orders, he was informed by the official that he must pay him fifty roubles before he could have his property back. This claim appeared to the peasant quite unconscionable, and on the advice of a neighbour he had come to beg me to draw up for him a petition against his extortionate oppressor. The peasant told me a long story: how he needed all the articles in question for his own consumption; he procured them in winter, when the transport was easier, and used them in the summer for his workpeople, of

whom he employed a great number. This was evidently all humbug; it was perfectly obvious that the good man was really a receiver of "stolen gold." On the other hand, it was as clear as daylight that the official had been guilty of an offence, having tried to use the peasant's infringement of the law as a means of extorting backsheesh for himself. I had already heard that this newly appointed satrap was grinding the faces of the whole population in this province —a district as large as many a German state, over which he was irresponsible master—and was diligently using his position to fill his own pockets. Nearly every night he paid surprise visits to the houses of the inhabitants, took possession of whatever fell into his hands, and then put it to ransom at a high price. At the same time he bullied the simple people in the good old fashion of official Russia, raging at them like a Berserker. His favourite speech was, "You fellows shall learn that I'm your Tsar and your God!"

The notion of teaching this functionary a lesson rather attracted me; but I did not want to play the hedge-lawyer, so I advised the peasant to find someone else to undertake the affair, as I knew there were officials whose business it was to write out appeals and complaints. He told me that they had refused to help him, as they were afraid of the *pristav*. So I finally decided there was nothing for it but to do as he asked; and that I should not appear to be denouncing the man secretly I added at the end of the document (though I knew I had no legal right to draw up petitions for other people)—"Written and signed for the illiterate petitioner by the political exile Leo Deutsch." By signing my own name I meant to show that it was far from my desire to make anonymous denunciations; and also I calculated that this circumstance would oblige the authorities to attend to the matter. The peasant was much pleased, thanked me warmly, and wanted to tip me a rouble for my trouble, which of course I declined.

For several months nothing was heard of the business;

then one day the *dessyàtnik*[1] came to me and called on me to go to the office, as the *prìstav* wished to speak to me. This order was quite irregular, as we "politicals" were only answerable to our own superintendent, not to the police. I therefore answered the *dessyàtnik* very shortly—

"Go and tell your *prìstav* that I am not at his beck and call, and that if he has anything to say he can come to me."

I made the man repeat my words till he had them correctly, and impressed upon him that he must tell the official exactly what I had said, which he did most conscientiously. The wrath of the "Tsar and God" may be imagined at receiving this answer in the presence of all the officials of the commune and a number of the peasantry. As I was subsequently informed, he stormed and raged like one possessed, and finally ordered that I should be put in irons and brought before him. Despite his categorical command the people hesitated to obey, and not till some hours later did the communal officers come to my house, and beg me, with all manner of apologies, to accompany them. I explained to them that the *prìstav* had no legal rights over me, and that it would be far more in order for him to communicate with me through the superintendent of the penal settlement. This contented the ambassadors, who returned and informed the *prìstav* that he had no jurisdiction over me. The day after I learned from our superintendent that all the *prìstav* had wanted was to tell me about a communication he had received in consequence of the complaint I had drawn up—a circumstance, therefore, that had nothing whatever to do with me. The whole affair fizzled out in the end; but when I left Kara some years later the peasant had not yet received back his goods, which still lay under the official seal in charge of the *prìstav*, and for aught I know they may lie there to this day.

[1] A village constable appointed by the inhabitants of the commune.—*Trans.*

AGED ORDINARY PRISONERS AT KARA

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For me personally the affair had no evil consequences. After the lapse of some months a document was sent me by the Governor, wherein I was warned that I was not permitted to draw up complaints for the inhabitants. Of course, if our relations with the peasant population had not been so cordial, the business might have led to trouble; but as it was, the authorities did not care to risk causing an agitation among the peasants by harsh measures towards us.

CHAPTER XXXII

THE DEATH OF THE TSAR—NEW MANIFESTOES—THE CENSUS

"DO you know that the Tsar is very ill? They say the doctors are doubtful of his recovery." A well-known official addressed me one day in these words.

The unexpected news surprised me very much. It had been a general belief that Alexander III., of whose herculean strength many stories were current, would attain a great age, and so be able to carry on his reactionary policy for many years to come; and now suddenly there shone a ray of hope, for even in Russia it is usual to expect much of a new ruler.

In November, 1894, came tidings of the Tsar's death; and soon afterwards two manifestoes were announced—one for the marriage of Nicholas II., and one for his coronation. This time I was not excluded. By the provisions of the first manifesto the entire term of my punishment was shortened by a third, *i.e.* by four years and some months; but this "grace" came when I had altogether only ten more months of convict life before me! By the second manifesto the time I had to wait before I could pass from the category of exile to that of simple peasant was altered from ten to four years. When I was told of the first manifesto I was also informed that I should have to go to Yakutsk as an exile: but eventually, in consequence of various circumstances, I did not avail myself of either proclamation. Private reasons occasioned

my preferring to remain in Kara; so I did not go into exile at all, but remained where I was as a convict, having obtained the Governor's permission to do so.

One cold December day in 1896 I suddenly heard the sound of sleigh-bells, and a sledge stopped before my house. The door opened, and a man entered wrapped in sheepskin and *dohà*.[1]

When he had emerged from his furs I recognised our *starshinà*,[2] an important functionary known and feared far and near. His wisdom and firmness had secured for this representative of the peasants' self-government an universal respect far above his social position. He was strong-minded and independent, and was said to be a very adroit and energetic man, but also hard, and morally not quite above reproach. He lived about thirty versts from my abode, and had only visited me on one former occasion. I therefore concluded that only some important reason could have induced him to come so far in the bitter cold. According to Siberian custom, he did not at once begin upon his business; but after he had drunk some glasses of hot tea and eaten something, he laid the case before me as follows:—

The Government had issued orders that a census of the whole population should be taken on an appointed day throughout the whole immense empire. For this purpose there would be required a large number of capable persons such as in Russia it was not very easy to find, and still less so in Siberia. The local authorities were hard put to it on this account, and the census superintendent of the district had consulted with his subordinates how to solve the problem. When affairs at Kara and the neighbouring villages came to be discussed, our *starshinà* had declared that he would only undertake the business on one con-

[1] A kind of cloak with fur both inside and out.

[2] The elder or chief of the commune, as the *stàrosta* is of the village.—*Trans.*

dition, namely, that I should help him. I was the only fit person; without me the thing would be impossible. The census superintendent had nothing to say against my participation in the work, and even the *prìstav* (against whom I had drawn up the complaint) could make no objection, though he himself was to take an active part in the proceedings. He had, in fact, to superintend the taking of the census in his own district, and if I were to assist I should be directly responsible to him.

The *starshinà* explained all this to me, and asked if I would consent. I agreed immediately; for the work involved would be a welcome relief to the monotony of my life, and was for a useful end. One circumstance only made me a little anxious—association with the *prìstav* might be awkward. However, the *starshinà* assured me that the man heartily regretted that old affair, would gladly have it forgotten, and bore me no grudge. One other obstacle—the difficulty of obtaining permission from the superintendent of the convict settlement—the *starshinà* himself undertook to remove.

The business was soon arranged, and I—the "political criminal"—was suddenly clothed with official dignity. I was to take the census in a village about fifteen versts away, with a large population of about a thousand souls; and I was then to enumerate the people of another village in conjunction with the pope.[1]

It was very interesting to look up these peculiar people in their own homes and to make personal acquaintance with them. Of course, there were many comical episodes and absurd misunderstandings; and on the other hand, I had glimpses of very sad—even tragic—circumstances.

My trouble was so far rewarded that the inhabitants expressed their gratitude to me in various ways, and the officials seemed to be impressed by my promptitude. I had accomplished my task some little time previously when one day in January, 1897, the *starshinà* paid me

[1] The village priest.—*Trans.*

another visit. The good man had again something to ask me. It was prescribed by the instructions that the head of every census-area should finally call together a certain number of the persons who had undertaken the work of enumeration in his district—one from each commune—to correct the results and draw up a general report.

The head of our district was, as I have said, my old opponent the *prìstav;* and I now learned that that gentleman was particularly desirous to persuade me, through the mediation of the *starshinà*, to represent our commune —the Shilkìnskaya Vòlost—at the committee of census-takers for his district.

The proposal had much to attract me. For more than eleven years I had never left Kara, and I knew only the adjacent villages. Now I was offered the chance of travelling a distance of some hundreds of versts, and that in a province which, as I was aware, contained much that was of great interest. The work of drawing up the general report likewise interested me. The only objection was association with a man I had come against in such an unpleasant way; but the eloquence of the *starshinà* again prevailed over my doubts, and I agreed to undertake the task. Permission for me to leave my place of internment was at once given, and I set off on my journey.

Of course I travelled at the State's expense. I received a pass from the Governor, which entitled me to requisition horses for my use wherever I went, and to lodge in the *zèmskaya kvàrtira*, or official residences;[1] in short, I was for the time being an official travelling on Government business.

A journey of the kind in a Siberian winter is no trifling matter. I was clad in furs, a *dohà* over all the rest, and so wrapped up in a fur rug that I could hardly move in the

[1] In every Siberian village a house is kept up by the inhabitants, at local expense, for the accommodation of any officials who may be passing through. *Zèmskaya kvàrtira* literally means "provincial quarters," or "communal quarters."—*Trans.*

sledge. The road ran for the most of the way through a practically uninhabited part of the province, a hilly, thickly wooded country, and the horses had hard work to get the sledge along. Every thirty or forty versts we came to a halting-station, where the horses were changed. When I arrived everyone was always most subservient and polite, giving me such a reception as befitted a very important official, which was sometimes extremely funny. At the first station where I was to spend the night, the elder of the village displayed a perfect fever of official zeal. I arrived late in the evening, and had at once sought my bed, when the man came to me, much disturbed.

"Has your Excellency any orders for me?"

I begged him to see that horses were ready for my start next morning; but that did not seem to satisfy him. He said that my gracious commands should be obeyed, and still insisted on decorating me with a title. When I explained to him who I really was, he admitted "certainly that was another thing"; but orders he was determined to have, notwithstanding, and asked if he should not fetch the census-takers of the village to wait on me. I naturally did not wish to disturb them in the middle of the night, which he could not understand at all. The people of other villages also astonished me by the fervour of their attentions; and I could not quite comprehend it, until I learned that our masterful *pristav* had travelled by the same route a few days before, and had spurred up his subordinates with injunctions to receive the "Censor of Shilkinskaya" (as I was entitled) with all honour, and to fulfil his orders most carefully.

As I approached the goal of my journey I met at the stations other census-takers, also on their way to the conference. Among these people a rumour was current that the head of our district had found the lists submitted to him unsatisfactory, and that the whole business would have to be done over again. Of course my colleagues were rather troubled over this, for such an undertaking might

easily cost them several days' work, and they had left pressing affairs behind them. Besides, the census-takers received but very scanty remuneration for their exertions —a few roubles only; or, if they preferred it, a medal which the Government had had struck for the purpose.

After two days I arrived at the Stanitsa Aigùnskaya, where the conference was to be held. I had been wondering all this while how my meeting with the *prìstav* would go off, and he, too, seemed to have had the same anxiety; for I had scarcely awakened next morning when a Cossack came to the *zèmskaya kvàrtira*, where I and the other census-takers had slept, and announced that the *prìstav* wished to speak to the Censor of Shilkinskaya. I told the man to say I would come as soon as I could, made a leisurely toilet, and had my breakfast. But in a short time appeared a fat man of about fifty, in the uniform of a police official, who introduced himself as "Head-of-the-census-district-of-so-and-so Bìbikov"—my *prìstav*, in fact. I on my side announced myself as "Census-taker Deutsch," and we chatted together most peaceably, as if we had never fallen out in our lives. The tormented man at once poured out his troubles to me. He could not manage his task at all, and confessed that he could not make head or tail of the divers instructions, orders, and circulars of the various authorities; neither did he know how to proceed with the examination of lists and drawing up of the report for his district. And then there were thirty census-takers worrying him, some of whom had come a whole week's journey from their homes; naturally they wanted to get back, and they were pressing him to release them, but he could not accede to their wishes, as all the lists seemed to him inadequate. His moving tale ended with a petition that I would stand by him; he knew how well I had managed things in my division, and I was the only man who could help him to bring this difficult task to a satisfactory conclusion. Several of the other census-takers, too, urged me to take the thing in hand; and as I was

interested to see how the work had been started from the beginning, and what a superintendent like the *prìstav* was expected to do, after some hesitation I consented, for which my quondam enemy thanked me effusively.

When we entered the official building the office was full of people. These were the census-takers, among whom were all kinds of persons—clerks, medical men, schoolmasters, and a great many Cossacks. Directly they saw the *prìstav* they crowded round him, begging him to try and finish up with them.

"Just look at them!" said the *prìstav;* "that's how it goes on every day. It's enough to drive one mad!"

I made them give me the papers, and tried to master their contents. As I had already guessed, the business was not really so difficult and puzzling as it had appeared to the poor police official; but it was work that did not come within his scope, and he had no notion how to tackle it. At the end of a few hours I had things in train, and could show him what he had to do.

The presence of the census-takers proved to be unnecessary, and they were able to go home next day, for which they were extremely grateful; but I myself had to remain a whole fortnight in the place. There was in fact a great deal of writing to do, and the *prìstav* and I were hard at it from morning to night. He was always politeness itself to me, and no one who witnessed his charming behaviour now could have believed that he had once given orders to put me in irons. But of course that episode was never alluded to.

CHAPTER XXXIII

A PREHISTORIC MONUMENT — MY DEPARTURE FROM KARA — LIFE IN STRETYENSK — MY TRANSFERENCE TO BLAGOVESTSHENSK — THE MASSACRES OF JULY, 1900

DURING my sojourn in Kara I took part in an expedition, the object of which was to discover the whereabouts of a curious relic of ancient times. One of our comrades, Kuznetsov by name, who by reason of his archæological researches was rather a noted personality in Siberia, had written to me on this subject. According to the testimony of various people, there was in the neighbourhood of Kara a monumental stone covered with ancient characters inscribed in some red colouring matter. This had been mentioned long before in the proceedings of the Geographical Society of Irkutsk, but had never been described in detail; and Kuznetsov—who himself lived at a considerable distance from Kara—was anxious that I should search for it and copy the inscription.

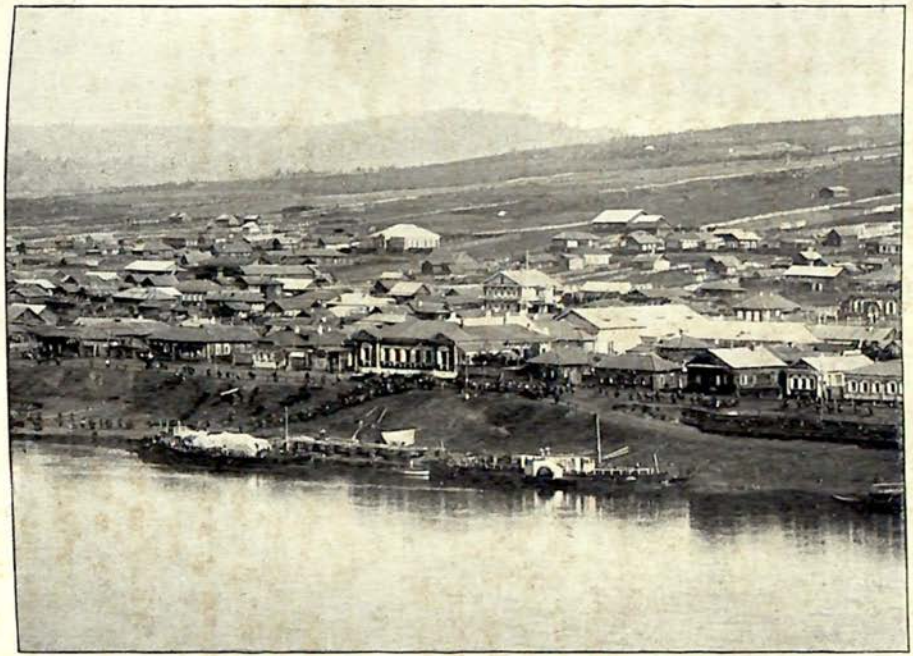
I gladly undertook the mission, and early one spring day I set out on the quest, accompanied by two friends, following the meagre clue we had been able to obtain. We only knew in a general way the direction and distance of our object, which was supposed to be near the banks of the River Bitshoug, about thirty-five versts away. There was no road, and we were obliged to go on foot across a very boggy bit of country, leading the horse which carried our provisions and other necessaries.

We started at dawn, reached the river towards evening, and there camped out for the night. During the next few days we explored the locality, but in vain, and we were at last obliged to return from our fruitless errand. I then made further inquiries about the stone among the inhabitants of the place, many of whom were hunters, and therefore well acquainted with the surrounding country, and I promised a reward to anyone who could guide me to it; but it was not until nearly two years later that I heard a report of how two peasants from a neighbouring village had seen something of the kind. This rumour proved correct; and a gold-digger of my acquaintance undertook to guide me to the object of my search, making the expedition by sledge, as it was then winter.

The monument with the red inscription turned out to be not far from the spot where I and my friends had previously looked for it, but the dense forest undergrowth had hidden it from us. It dates undoubtedly from a very early period, and consists of a smooth perpendicular surface hewn in the rock, whereon curious signs and characters are drawn.

We made a careful sketch of the monument, and a photographer who happened to visit Kara subsequently took separate photographs of the whole stone and of the coloured characters. These I sent to Kuznetsov, with a detailed description, but I have never heard whether the meaning of the inscription has been deciphered.

When, in consequence of the imperial manifesto, I passed from the category of convict into that of exile, the change only affected my circumstances in that it deprived me of the right to an allowance from the State. Henceforward I was thrown entirely on my own resources, and the task of supporting myself was no light one. The population of Kara diminished steadily, and among others the family whose children I had taught for several years removed from the place. It was absolutely impossible to find any other



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remunerative occupation; my relations at home were sending me no money, and my affairs got into a very unsatisfactory state. I had a host of debts, and could expect assistance from no one.

Just then began the work in connection with the construction of the railway in the Stanitsa of Stretyensk, some hundred versts distant from Kara. I decided to migrate thither; and, the Governor having given me the necessary permission, I left Kara on the 20th of May, 1897.

The Stanitsa of Stretyensk, situated on the banks of the large and navigable River Shilka, was at that time the scene of much activity. The population had increased to between four and five thousand; there were some good shops and several business firms. The ordinary inhabitants, besides the Cossacks, were chiefly Jews; but the railway works had brought all kinds of people to the place—officials, clerks, contractors, etc.—so that Stretyensk had taken on more the appearance of a thriving town than of a mere Cossack village.

I soon found a post, and a comparatively good one, on the railway; my duties being to draw up the various orders, advices, and circulars, and to copy them out. But the yearning for a fuller life possessed me here even more than at Kara, partly induced by the more bustling life of the busy little place, partly by the total absence of any congenial society. In Kara I had had comrades with whom I could converse on every kind of topic; but in Stretyensk, though I knew nearly everybody at least by name, there was no single person to whom I could talk about anything beyond the most everyday matters. The principal, and almost the only, subject of conversation was money. The flow of capital into the country on account of the new railway had aroused in the inhabitants an almost incredible greed and a feverish desire of becoming rich. There were numbers of people who recoiled at nothing in the pursuit of this aim—cheating, dishonesty,

even downright theft, were all in the order of the day; and the irresponsibility and arbitrariness of officials which prevails throughout Russia, and especially in Siberia, greatly assisted in undermining the morals of the population. Many large fortunes were made in an extraordinarily short time.

The only relaxations from this constant working and striving after riches were drinking and card-playing. Not only was there no library in the Stanitsa, but there was not even a school for the children of those who were not Cossacks, *i.e.* a greater part of the inhabitants. When I of necessity entered into the society of the place I felt myself in a world entirely strange to me, and utterly uncongenial. It was hardly possible for any, even intelligent, young man to escape being driven to drinking or gambling in such an atmosphere.

It is true that here I had the advantage of more freedom of movement than in Kara, and that I could go further afield. During the two years of my stay in Stretyensk I frequently made long excursions in different directions; and on these expeditions I became more closely acquainted with local conditions, and learned to understand the life of Siberia much better than would be possible from any amount of mere reading up the subject.

In the spring of 1899, while travelling, I met with a comrade of my own way of thinking, who had been exiled by "administrative methods." It was the first time I had met a Social Democrat newly come from Russia, and my delight may be easily imagined. We talked nearly all through the night, and I learned for the first time from him how great had been the expansion of our movement among the working classes during the last ten years, and how quickly the idea of Social Democracy had taken root in Russia. I was especially impressed by his account of its development among the Jewish workers in the western provinces.

Under the influence of the feelings aroused by this

intelligence, my longing to return home sprang up with redoubled strength. This thought had been kept in the background during the last few years; but now it forced itself upon me with urgent insistence. What were the possibilities of the case? This question was hard to answer with any certainty. I had now been fourteen years in Siberia, and it was fifteen years since my arrest in Freiburg; in accordance with the terms of the last imperial manifesto, by which I was to benefit, I might go home after another seven years,[1] and this term might conceivably be further shortened by some fortunate concatenation of circumstances. Once more to see European Russia, where I had not been as a free man for twenty years, was the most fervent wish of my heart; yet what warrant had I for supposing I should be still alive in another seven years? or that, being alive, I should actually be granted the privilege of returning to Russia? Life in Siberia became each year more irksome to me. I found it well-nigh impossible to remain in Stretyensk, and I determined to go further east, to the comparatively large town of Blagovèstshensk. After exerting myself for some time to obtain permission to do this, I at last succeeded, and in the autumn of 1899 I quitted Stretyensk.

I found myself much better off at Blagovèstshensk; I soon got employment on one of the two local newspapers, and the work was far more interesting than that to which I had hitherto been condemned. The society here, also, was much more agreeable, for the town contained many cultivated people, and also several comrades in our movement, political exiles like myself. The town possessed schools, a public library, a theatre, a telephone service—in short, so far as outward civilisation went, Blagovèstshensk stood in no way behind European towns of the same size, and was even in some ways more advanced. During the last few years the place has attained an unenviable notoriety from the occurrences there at the time of the

[1] See note, p. 293.—*Trans.*

war with China in 1900. I thus became an involuntary witness of that terrible series of events of which the Russian Government gave such a lying version to the world. In the interests of truth I will here relate the particulars from my own experience as an eye-witness of much that occurred.[1]

First of all let me give some details about Blagovèstshensk. It is the chief, and was formerly the only town in the Amur province, which covers a considerably larger area than many a European state. Blagovèstshensk is situated on the flat left bank of the Amur river, which for a long distance forms the boundary between Russia and China; before the war it contained 38,000 inhabitants. Most of the houses are of wood, and there are no fortifications.

On the right bank of the river, exactly opposite the town, was the Chinese village of Saghalien.[2] There was constant intercourse between the dwellers on either bank, carried on in summer by means of boats and junks, in winter over the ice; for the Chinese and Manchurians were the chief purveyors of supplies to the inhabitants of Blagovèstshensk, especially of meat and vegetables. Until the spring of 1900 relations between the two settlements had been uniformly peaceful; but after the murder in Pekin of the German ambassador, von Ketteler, and the decision of the Russian Government, on January 24th, to mobilise the Siberian army, constraint and tension began to make themselves felt. On the Chinese side of the river military exercises took place every evening; the beating of the tattoo sounded, and the firing of cannon was heard, which had never been known to happen before. To the inquiries of the Russian authorities as to the meaning of all this, the Chinese answered that a small detachment of

[1] The remainder of this chapter appeared, with a few further details, in *Die Neue Zeit*, February, 1902. Extracts from the article were quoted at the time in many Continental and some English journals.—*Trans.*

[2] Not to be confused with the *island* of Saghalien.—*Trans.*

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soldiers had been quartered there for the summer. This reply entirely satisfied the administrators of Blagovèstshensk, but not the inhabitants; many of them opined that the Chinese were not having gun-practice for nothing, and telescopes further showed that earthworks were being constructed in the neighbourhood of Saghalien. The representations of people who had observed this only elicited from the Russian military governor of the Amur province—General N. R. Gribsky—the assurance that these were trifles, and need disquiet no one.

Meanwhile there were but few soldiers in Blagovèstshensk—two or three regiments of infantry, a regiment of Cossacks, and a brigade of artillery—and by order of the Governor-General Grodekov even these were almost all withdrawn on July 11th and sent down the Amur to Habarovsk, while only one company of soldiers, a hundred Cossacks, and two guns (one of which proved later to be totally useless) were left behind in the town. Besides these there were about two thousand reservists, who had been called out in accordance with the mobilisation order; but in view of the entire lack of arms and ammunition, these reservists were of little use, and certainly could not count as any efficient protection to the town.

The departure of the military, for which many steamers and barges were needed, took place with much ceremony, and was watched by an immense crowd of people. This could not fail to be observed by the Chinese inhabitants of Saghalien, who were thus made aware that the Russian town was left almost defenceless.

Further down the river, about thirty versts from Blagovèstshensk, is the little Chinese town of Aigùn. When the Russian soldiery came to this place on July 12th, the Chinese allowed the boats to pass without hindrance until all but the last steamer had gone by, and then opened fire upon this last boat, which contained the ammunition, forcing it to return to Blagovèstshensk. The news of this attack spread through the town on the evening of the next

day, and aroused great uneasiness among the inhabitants, even the administration at last becoming alarmed. By order of General Gribsky, the military governor, a meeting of the Town Council was called for the morning of the 14th, and this conference was attended, not only by all the town councillors, but by many of the more important residents, by various officials, directors of the bank, etc., and I myself was present as the correspondent of a local paper.

Colonel Orfenov spoke in the name of the military governor; and after he had explained to the assembly how scanty were the means of defence available to the military authorities, he proposed that he himself should undertake the organisation of affairs. Though it had been known that after the departure of the troops there could not be many soldiers left in the town, nobody had supposed that their number was as small as now appeared from Colonel Orfenov's account. His frank statement made a great impression on his audience, and alarmed them considerably. Many turned pale or showed other signs of emotion, and the voices of the councillors, whose speeches followed, trembled with excitement. After a short discussion it was decided to call for volunteers. The town was at once divided into military districts, and a chief with two assistants appointed for each. Thereupon some members of the Council repaired to the military governor to inform him of their decision and to consult with him upon the situation.

As I was afterwards informed by one of those who spoke then with General Gribsky, he thanked the town's representatives for their readiness to undertake the duties of defence, and tried to quiet their apprehensions of danger from the Chinese. When asked if he did not think it necessary to take steps with regard to those Chinese who dwelt in great numbers in Blagovèstshensk itself and its neighbourhood, he declared that in his opinion any such special measures would be unnecessary and inadvisable, as

war had not been declared between Russia and China. The General further informed the deputation that he had already been approached by representatives of the Chinese in the town, with the question whether it would not be better for Chinese subjects to withdraw betimes from Russian territory. Whereupon (and this was his own account of the matter) he had told the delegates to inform their compatriots that they might remain where they were without anxiety, as they were on the soil of the great Russian Empire, whose Government would never allow peaceful foreigners to be molested. Finally, the governor stated to our representatives that he himself, with the remaining detachment of soldiers and the hundred Cossacks, would go on the following day to Aigùn, in order to free that place from the Boxers, to occupy it, and so to ensure free passage on the Amur for Russian vessels. This latter plan, however, was never carried out; for the active hostility of the Chinese towards the people of Blagovèstshensk manifested itself earlier than anyone had expected.

On that very same afternoon, when a great number of people of all classes had assembled at the municipal buildings to enrol themselves as volunteers, the noise of gunshots suddenly resounded from the Chinese shore; and from the windows of the town-hall, where I was myself, we saw people hurrying in crowds from the shore, crying, "The Chinese are firing! the Chinese are attacking us!"

The volunteers in the town-hall believed, when they heard these cries, that the Chinese were attacking the utterly defenceless town, and an indescribable panic ensued; some rushed into the street, others hurried to the armoury of the hall (where, as everyone knew, some hundred old guns were stored), crying, "Arms! give us arms!" The number of these weapons was of course insufficient to arm all the volunteers, and many, chiefly the poorer people, then rushed to the shops—which, as it

was Sunday, were closed—broke in, and possessed themselves by force of any weapons they could lay their hands on. The entire community was overcome with terror. Numbers of the inhabitants packed up their valuables and fled from the town on foot or on horseback; or took refuge with friends who lived at a greater distance from the river and in stone houses, which could afford better protection from shot or shell. The idea that the Chinese might crowd into the defenceless town, set it on fire, and practise all manner of horrible cruelties on the inhabitants, drove many people into a state of positive desperation.

It would in truth have cost a disciplined army of small proportions but little trouble to destroy Blagovèstshensk in a few hours, but luckily for its citizens the Chinese were very bad marksmen; most of their shells never reached the town, but fell into the Amur, or else they failed to explode. Thanks to this there were only between fifteen and twenty of the townspeople killed and wounded during the whole bombardment.

On the second day of the siege Blagovèstshensk presented a forlorn appearance—shops closed; windows and doors fast shut; no horses and hardly any foot-passengers in the streets, people who had ventured out keeping close to the walls, and hurrying over the crossings for fear of stray bullets; all business at a standstill.

We had already organised a garrison of volunteers. All along the river bank, for a distance of several versts, shelters were dug out hastily and by night, in which volunteers of all ages and classes were posted to observe the Chinese on the opposite shore and so render a surprise almost impossible. Many people, however, saw danger in quite another direction, namely, from the Chinese quarter of the town itself. Here dwelt Chinese and Manchurians in considerable numbers—merchants, tradesmen, day-labourers—whose work had been most useful to the whole community. Industrious in the extreme, and modest in their requirements, these Chinese subjects had never given

the smallest cause for complaint; honesty and conscientiousness were their leading attributes, and in many shops and commercial houses, and also in private dwellings, entire trust was reposed in them as employees. By many Russian families with whom the young Chinese were in domestic service they were looked on as friends; often they were taught the Russian language, which they would study with the greatest diligence. But by the lower and less cultivated classes of the Russian population the Chinese had never been regarded with favour; they were looked upon as foreigners who obstinately refused to amalgamate with the Russians, for the Chinese never, with the rarest exceptions, alter their customs or their outlook on life. The workmen saw in them dangerous competitors, for it is well known that before the Chinese came to the Amur wages were higher, (though, on the other hand, after the war, when cheap Chinese labour disappeared, many articles that had been within the means of the poorer classes became prohibitively dear).

From these causes, and also from sheer brutality—for coarse and cruel elements are to be found in every nation—it happened that even in peaceful times the Chinese were often maltreated by Russians when they met in the streets, hustled or knocked about, or their pigtails pulled. Some more flagrant instances of oppression of the humble, timid Chinaman even found their way into the columns of the local press; and there were further instances of this sort after the mobilisation order, when numbers of reservists, called in from their employments in the country districts, filled the streets, and would often (especially when drunk) fall on any Chinese they encountered, beat them unmercifully, and call after them, "It's your fault, you dogs, that we're taken from our work and our families and sent to our deaths!" In the eyes of the ordinary European the Chinese were not human beings, but "cattle," "beasts"; and the state of things engendered by this feeling had caused the military governor to issue a proclamation,

threatening with punishment those who molested peaceful Chinese subjects.

Trusting in the assurances of the highest local authority, the Chinese and Manchurians of Blagovèstshensk and its environs, to the number of several thousand souls, had remained on the spot. They were soon bitterly to rue having done so. Even on the 14th of July, when firing from the Chinese shore was in progress, and the frightened crowd was in panic-stricken flight, one could see how as they ran they would turn upon and maltreat any unlucky Chinaman who happened to be in the way. Chinese and Manchurians fled through the town in a most pitiable condition, seeking some safe corner in which to hide; and on the evening of the same day cases were reported of their being murdered in the open street. Persons whose word could be trusted asserted that the police officials themselves had advised citizens to kill any Chinese abroad in the town that evening; for many feared that those on Russian territory might come to the assistance of their compatriots by setting fire to the town. It was also supposed that there might be supporters of the Boxers in the town, and to this fear had been due the first suggestions of its being advisable to take measures with regard to the native population. The more temperate and reflecting thought it would be sufficient if those Chinese for whom Russian citizens would be surety—and of these there would be many—were left to the care of their European protectors, and if the rest were assembled together in one place and put under proper supervision. But it turned out that the local authorities were of a different opinion.

On the second day after the commencement of the bombardment Cossacks both mounted and on foot might be seen, together with police, going round to every house and inquiring whether there were any Chinese inmates. If asked what was wanted with them, they replied that all Chinese in the town were to be brought together and placed under the charge of the police. Suspecting that nothing

good was intended, many people sought to conceal the Chinese who were with them, hiding them in cellars and attics; but often the neighbours informed the police of this, and then the Cossacks would insist, with threats and even with drawn swords, on their being delivered up. This process of arresting the Chinese lasted over several days.

I can hardly describe the consternation of these unhappy people when told they must go to the police office. Hastily collecting their belongings, they followed the Cossacks with faces of unspeakable dismay; and when taking leave of their European friends they gave them their money and goods to take care of, in many cases begging them to discharge some debt, or even giving them the free disposition of their effects—perhaps houses and shops full of valuable property. Foreseeing their tragic fate, many asked on the way, "Will they behead us?"

They were not mistaken in their fears. Murder in cold blood awaited them; and only during the Middle Ages, at the time of the Inquisition and the persecution of heretics, Jews, and Moors in Spain, have such inhuman proceedings as now followed been equalled.

Some versts above Blagovèstshensk, on the left bank of the Amur, there is a Cossack settlement. Thither before sunrise several thousand Chinese, among them old men, cripples, invalids, women, and children, were driven by the Cossacks and police. Those who for sickness or fatigue could not get so far were stabbed on the road by the Cossacks. One man, a representative of the great Chinese firm Li-Wa-Chan, refused to proceed, demanding to be taken to the governor, who had promised the Chinese delegates safety for all who remained on Russian soil; but for answer the Cossacks killed him then and there. The deputy-*prìstav*, Shabanov, was present, and uttered no word of protest against this iniquitous deed.

When the miserable Chinese had been driven down to the shore of the Amur, they were commanded *to go into*

the water. Means there were none for reaching the opposite Chinese shore; the river at this point is more than half a verst (about one-third of a mile) in width, and flows with a strong current. One can picture what terror seized on the poor creatures at the water's edge. Falling on their knees, with hands raised to heaven, or even crossing themselves, they implored to be spared such a death. Many vowed to become Christians and to be naturalised as Russian subjects. But the only response vouchsafed to their prayers by the merciless fulfillers of official orders were bayonet-thrusts, and blows with the butt-end of rifles or with swords, to drive them into the river-depths; any who still continued to resist were simply murdered on the spot.

Persons who by chance were eye-witnesses of this wholesale drowning and massacring, which proceeded on several successive days before the rising of the sun, tell of frightful and heartrending scenes. One Manchurian family that was driven into the water consisted of father, mother, and two little children. The parents each took a child, and tried to swim across the Amur, but all were soon sucked down by the current. In another family there was one child; the mother besought the murderers and the bystanders at least to take the little one and spare its life, but no one would do so. She then left it on the bank and herself entered the water, but after a few steps returned, seized her child, and carrying it went back into the river, then again returned and laid down her precious burden. Here the Cossacks intervened to end her vacillations, stabbing both parent and child. The tortures of this wretched mother and of all the victims thus driven to their death can be imagined by everyone not dead to all human feeling. Even the above-mentioned police officer, Shabanov, declared that he could not remain to the end of this scene of horror.

But very few of that immense multitude, and those only the strongest swimmers, succeeded in getting anywhere near

ON THE AMUR NEAR BLAGOVESTSHENSK—THE SCENE OF THE MASSACRE

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the Chinese shore; yet even of these but a small number survived. When the Cossacks saw that they were likely to save themselves they sent a few well-planted shots after them; and Chinese marksmen, too, posted in trenches on the opposite side, fired on the swimmers—either because they took them for Russians, or because they considered as enemies all Chinese who had remained in a Russian province after, as was asserted, a proposal had been made to them that they should return to their homes long before the beginning of hostilities.

When, on July 17th, great numbers of corpses became visible floating down the Amur it was clear to everyone in Blagovèstshensk that these peaceful unarmed Chinese inhabitants of the town, whom the governor himself had advised not to return to China, but to trust in his promise of protection, had been done to death. Scarcely two days after the guarantee had been given, General Gribsky had faithlessly broken his word, by giving the verbal order to "*send back the Chinese subjects to China.*"

Indignation and horror filled the minds of all right-thinking people when they learned in what manner that order had been carried out. The dreadful story was told with tears and shuddering; many longed to protest, and express their burning wrath at the barbarous treatment of the poor harmless Chinese workpeople, but how was that possible in Russia? Besides, on the 17th itself, Blagovèstshensk and the entire province of the Amur had been put under martial law; consequently anyone who dared to protest would have been instantly dragged before a court-martial. Some of those who compassionated the Chinese tried at least to prevent the continuance of the reign of terror. A few instances occurred where people who had managed to conceal Chinese servants or guests in their houses, went to the local authorities with urgent petitions that they might be allowed to offer personal surety for these survivors of the massacre; and some who had exceptional influence succeeded in saving

one or two. But such cases were rare, and nearly all who were preserved in this way had to remain in custody of the police throughout the siege.

The rich young merchant Yun-Tcha-San (a man with a European education, speaking both Russian and French) succeeded in escaping in this manner, by heavily bribing the officials; but he is reported to have said that had he known what frightful humiliations he would be subjected to, he would rather have perished in the river.

A lady well known in the town, Madame Makeyeva, went to the governor, with whom she was personally acquainted, to beg that her young Chinese servant, who had been five years in her house, might remain with her. This servant had been of the greatest value to the family; if anyone were ill he nursed and tended them, watching by their bedside day and night. But when General Gribsky found that it was for a Chinese Madame Makeyeva was entreating, he cried, "A Chinaman!" and drawing his hand across his throat, added, "That's how we shall treat them all." And when Madame Makeyeva persisted in her entreaties, explaining further that the man in question had long wished to become a Christian, the governor merely answered, "I do not issue orders for either the imprisonment or the release of these people, it has nothing to do with me"; following up this with the declaration of his intention (which he subsequently carried out) to lay the whole blame of the drowning and slaughtering on the shoulders of his subordinates, Batarèvitch, prefect of police, and Captain Volkovinsky.

The same lady had a similar reception from the highest spiritual authority of the place, the Bishop of the Orthodox Church. When Madame Makeyeva begged him on her knees to baptise her Chinese servant, this apostle of Christian love told her drily that she should not intercede for Chinamen, that it was not right to have them about one; finally recommending her to go to the civil authorities, whose business it was. The worldly power sent her to the

spiritual, and the latter back to the former; but after much difficulty she actually succeeded in gaining her end. Few were so persevering in their efforts as she; I only found a very few instances of Chinese being successfully interceded for by their Russian employers, although I made very careful and exhaustive inquiries on the subject. The Chinese and Manchurians of the native quarter found no such advocates, and they were all drowned or otherwise murdered without exception.

Apologists for the massacre were found even among people of culture, who argued that even had there not been the danger that the Chinese would set the town on fire, we were not called on to strengthen our enemies by sending their compatriots to reinforce them, or to waste our own provisions by keeping them under guard and so having to feed them. As to the former excuse, the natives could have been rendered perfectly harmless by being massed together in one place; and as for the latter, the Chinese had ample provision for their extremely modest needs in their own shops, which after their death were plundered by Cossacks, police, and others.

In the attempt to justify their brutal action a false report was spread by the police that arms, gunpowder, and even dynamite were found in the Chinese shops and houses; and though this was never confirmed in any way, many persons were only too ready to believe it. As a matter of fact, the possibilities of loot, as well as the repudiation of debts owed to Chinese creditors, played a large part in causing both the massacre and the justifying of it. When the Chinese were arrested the Cossacks and police took their money and ransacked their dwellings; and not only the lower but the higher officials enriched themselves considerably by this means, the booty that this or that police officer or member of the local administration had obtained for his share being discussed quite openly. Many debtors of the Chinese profited by the terrible end of their unfortunate creditors, as it is not customary for Chinese

business men to keep written memoranda; their methods are based upon personal trust, and their own honesty is proverbial. If in any instances such memoranda did exist, care was taken that they should disappear, in case any claim should afterwards be made by heirs possibly existing in China; while on the other hand Russian creditors of the Chinese repaid themselves a hundredfold, with the connivance of the police. It would take too long to relate all the examples of the wholesale looting that was carried on by "respectable" merchants and others; but one or two typical instances may be recorded.

A rich landowner, proprietor of a large steam-mill, Buyanov by name, of whom some Chinese had hired a warehouse for their goods, when the owners of the property stored there had been drowned, put up a wooden hoarding between the warehouse and the next house to it, in order that he might possess himself of the dead men's property unobserved by inquisitive eyes. Another man of property, also named Buyanov, and a cousin of the above, made a subterranean passage from his own dwelling to the shop of a Chinaman who had lived with him, and conveyed the property of the deceased to his own premises. And a tradesman named Prikastshikov simply had the wares of a Chinaman who had hired a shop from him carried on waggons through by-streets to his own shop in a different part of the town, having made use of a duplicate key which was in his possession. These two last cases came before the courts in Blagovêstshensk, and the perpetrators of the thefts were punished; but the great majority of these instances of plunder were never revealed, chiefly because the police and the authorities were themselves interested in shielding the guilty. After the drowning of the Chinese it was decided that the police should take charge of their property till legal heirship should be established, and this proved a source of much profit to the police officials, as may be guessed when the character of our police is taken into account, together with the fact that

in the Chinese quarter were some hundreds of shops and warehouses containing valuables worth many millions. After the war the police authorities in a few cases surrendered property (for a substantial consideration, of course, sometimes amounting nearly to the value of the goods themselves,) to Chinese who proved themselves to be the owners, having fortunately survived, or their legitimate representatives; but it depended entirely upon the ransom offered whether the police would recognise or reject such claims, not upon any legal formalities. The calm way in which high officials appropriated property left in their charge was exemplified by the case of the deputy-*prìstav* Shabanov, surprised by a gentleman, (a justice of the peace who had been appointed guardian of a Chinese property,) as he was in the act of removing several cartloads of the goods in question from the place where they were stored. Although this aroused considerable comment, and even came before the courts, the trial was without result, and Shabanov was not even removed from his position as deputy-*prìstav*.

During several successive days the bodies of the murdered Chinese went floating down the Amur in such masses as made counting them difficult, and covering a considerable expanse of the river. Yet at first no mention was made of this in the two local newspapers, nor was there any allusion to the fate of the Chinese inhabitants of the town. Only on the fourth or fifth day after the holocaust did an article appear in *The Amur Province*, expressing indignation at the cruel and gruesome affair. This article was copied in Petersburg journals, and thus the civilised world for the first time learned how these thousands of helpless people had been done to death. The other organ of Blagovèstshensk, *The Amur Gazette*, confined itself to the meagre announcement that "the Chinese residing on Russian territory had been sent away, a suggestion having been made to them that they should cross to the other

side of the river." Grodekov, the governor-general of the province, informed the authorities in Petersburg that "the Chinese throw their dead and wounded into the river, and forty such corpses have been counted." Thus is history written!

With much the same amount of veracity various officials sent reports of the hostilities between the Russians and the Chinese. They told of battles that had never taken place, of countless Chinese hosts, which they pretended had been annihilated, when in reality only women and children had been seen, and so forth. In the Amur province, for example, much amusement was caused by the report sent from Colonel Kanonovitch stating that in the so-called "Pyàtaia Pad" he had overcome an immense army of Chinese, for which exploit he received a decoration. It soon transpired that in the place mentioned Kanonovitch had only encountered two Japanese women!

But to return to Blagovèstshensk. There is no doubt that the drowning of the Chinese took place not only with the foreknowlege, but by the express order—though possibly only verbal—of General Gribsky, military governor of the town. To avert suspicion of the fact, however, and in order to have a justification of himself ready if need should arise, he issued a proclamation some days after the massacre, saying that "reports had reached" him "of the rough handling and even murder of unarmed Chinese in and about the town." "These crimes," he proceeded, "have been committed by inhabitants of the town, peasants of the villages around, or Cossacks; and although these deeds were provoked by the treachery of the Chinese, who had first commenced hostilities against the Russians, any further instances of violence towards unarmed persons will be punished severely." But, together with this proclamation, after the taking of Saghalien by the Russians, General Gribsky issued another, in which—as head of the Cossack forces—he ordered the Cossacks to go across to the Chinese shore and there "annihilate all the Chinese bands."

In other words, he told the Cossacks to massacre the helpless Chinese who were left in the place after the flight of the troops; for when once Saghalien had fallen, no *armed* bands were left on the right bank of the Amur.

General Gribsky carried his hypocrisy so far as to appoint a commission to inquire into "the cases of violence towards peaceful Chinese." But as this commission would have had to report that the drowning and murder of peaceful Chinese had been carried out under his own instructions, naturally its findings could not be published. So, after the lapse of several months, General Gribsky declared that from the report made to him by the commission it was evident that the cause of the unfortunate events which had occurred had been a want of unity among the officials to whom he had entrusted the arrangement of affairs. This declaration repeats almost word for word the pronouncement of the present Tsar, Nicholas II., after the death of thousands on the plain of Hodinsky at the time of his coronation; the cause of which the Tsar also found to have been a lack of unity in the arrangements. General Gribsky evidently wished to suggest that if on an occasion of holiday-making, wholesale deaths had occurred in this way, nobody could really be held responsible for the killing of Chinese during the bombardment of Blagovèstshensk. And nobody was ever brought to book; General Gribsky and all his subordinates remained on at Blagovèstshensk in their divers positions.

It came to light eventually that various authorities throughout the province had sent direct written instructions to put the Chinese to death; and that killing the unfortunate people singly and wholesale had been carried out in many villages by the peasants, and in Cossack settlements by the Cossacks. Several officials won notoriety by their instructions to their subordinates on this head—Volkovinsky (the colonel of Cossacks), Captain Tusslukov, and the *stanovoi prìstav* (commissary of rural police) Volkov, among others.

Obedient to the will of their superiors, the Russian peasants and Cossacks armed themselves as they could, and began the work of destruction. I cannot undertake to describe what went on in the Manchurian territory on the Seya—a strip of land not far from Blagovèstshensk, the inhabitants of which, though living on Russian soil, were Chinese subjects and (by a diplomatic arrangement) paid taxes to China. Enough to say that altogether sixty-eight villages were burnt to the ground, that of their inhabitants, some were drowned, some barbarously murdered, that property was looted, and cattle were driven off by the Russians. In perpetrating these and other brutalities—either on their own initiative or following out instructions—our peasants thoroughly believed that they were fulfilling their duty as loyal subjects. "That is how we ought to serve our Tsar and country," one stalwart hero concluded his narrative. Persons who in time of peace were merciful even to dumb animals were changed by those days of horror into stark barbarians. Here is an example: In one Russian village an old Chinaman had lived for years in the service of a shepherd, and all the peasants were most friendly with him. The report reached them that "all Chinese must be killed." They therefore called a village council and consulted as to what should be done with the one Chinaman in the place; and although everyone agreed that he was a good and honest old man, it was decided that he must be put to death. When the people with whom he lived broke the news to him he humbly submitted to the decree, only begging that they would accompany him to the place where he was to die.

"I am a lonely old man," he said. "I have neither kith nor kin. Do you replace my family and go with me to the grave, as is the custom of my people."

The shepherd and his wife acceded to his request, and went with him to the outskirts of the village, where the peasants then slew the unresisting old man.

After a fortnight or so of these massacres, when the thirst for blood began to be appeased, and the authorities ceased to spur the people on to deeds of violence, they began to collect together and bring into the town the few Chinese who remained alive, half-dead with hunger and mad with terror. These poor wretches, scarcely able to move for exhaustion, and those of the Chinese townspeople who for one reason or another had been allowed to survive —some few dozen persons—were all that remained of the many thousand Chinese who had dwelt in Blagovèstshensk and the neighbourhood.

It was not difficult to foresee what character the war would assume when our soldiers and Cossacks passed over into Chinese territory. Scarcely had they crossed the Amur on August 3rd and taken possession of Saghalien (from which place the inhabitants had fled betimes to the interior of the country), when they set everything on fire. During the two following nights the flames illuminated the river for a long distance; and in place of a prosperous community which supplied Blagovèstshenk with food-stuffs at very moderate rates, nothing was to be seen on the Chinese bank but blackened posts and crumbling ruins.

The entry of our army into Manchuria was not merely signalised by flaming dwellings; nothing and nobody was spared. Women, children, and the aged were pitilessly slaughtered, young girls violated and then slain. Such were the deeds of our "heroes," as General Grodekov in his despatches called these warriors, for whose "brave deeds" he "could not find words to express his admiration"! But even some of his officers themselves told with a shudder of the bloodthirsty instincts developed by these "heroes" in a war against unarmed men, women, and children on Chinese soil. A rich and thickly-populated land was reduced in a few months to a barren desert, where charred ruins were visible here and there, and corpses were left to the wolves and vultures.

When indignation is expressed at these atrocities it is customary to meet with the excuse, "Read the accounts of the cruelties practised by Germans, French, and English in China. If more civilised races behave so, what can be expected from us less cultivated Russians?" It is hard to answer this. The white races did indeed prove during that terrible war with "barbaric China," as they contemptuously say, the full worth of their boasted civilisation. On the threshold of the twentieth century average Europeans showed themselves scarcely less barbarous than the hordes of Tamerlane and Tchengis-Khan.

All this shocking achievement of Russian officialdom, either directly or indirectly authorised, of course went unpunished. But no! I must let the exact truth have its way. General Gribsky held a judicial inquiry into the conduct of his subordinates (who had carried out his own orders), and the Russian newspapers shortly afterwards informed their readers that "the chief of police in Blagovèstshensk had been sentenced to three months' imprisonment"—for the drowning, shooting, or stabbing of from ten to fifteen thousand helpless and inoffensive Chinese!

CHAPTER XXXIV

MY FLIGHT FROM SIBERIA—THE END OF MY JOURNEY ROUND THE WORLD—MY FRIEND AXELROD AGAIN —CONCLUSION

THE terrible events that had happened in the town, and the death of our unhappy fellow-citizens, could not but leave an indelible impression on many people's minds, my own included. Blagovèstshensk had become so detestable to us that many left the place as soon as things were quiet again. Unfortunately I could not follow their example at once; but I determined on the first opportunity to transfer myself to the Far East, in which I had long been interested. I intended to settle in the busy commercial town of Vladivostock, and there patiently await the time when I might be free to return home. Before that time could arrive five or six years had still to pass; but the nearer the time came, the more irrepressible grew the desire to quit Siberia, and the thought of flight recurred again and again. Nevertheless doubts also arose whether it were worth while to jeopardise the freedom, however limited, that I had won by my sixteen years of prison and exile. If my attempt failed, I should have rendered myself liable to all the rigour of the law; and I was no longer of an age to bear suffering and privations as in youth, for I was now well past my fortieth year.

Thus did I hesitate backward and forward until the spring of 1901, when various personal reasons made me come to a definite decision, which resulted in my burning

the bridge behind me, as the saying goes. I resolved to escape as soon as the Amur was open for travelling again.

Circumstances favoured my project; a kind friend who had a large connection throughout the country promised his aid, and the following plan seemed the easiest of execution. I was to leave Blagovèstshensk unobserved, going first to Habarovsk and thence to Vladivostock, where I must take my passage on a foreign vessel bound for Japan; and this I succeeded in carrying through, with the help of the friend above mentioned.

It need hardly be said that I cannot give all the details of my flight from Siberia, where I was under strict police supervision; for I must not compromise those who assisted me. As I went on board the steamboat that was leaving for Habarovsk, (of course, taking no luggage with me,) there suddenly appeared the deputy-*prìstav* to whose district I belonged. Of course, at the first moment I thought my plans had been discovered, and I was not a little alarmed; but I was soon satisfied that the official had merely come to take leave of some friends who were travelling by the same boat. It evidently never entered his head that I was taking my departure from Blagovestshensk under the very nose of the police; I suppose he thought that, like himself, I had come to say farewell to some friend, (which was quite permissible,) and I managed that he should lose sight of me, so that he might imagine I had gone home.

I found there were people of my acquaintance on board who belonged to the place; but they apparently never once thought that I was leaving Siberia for good; and in conversation with them I let it appear that I was travelling on some official commission. Our boat was a tug, and therefore went very slowly; it stopped at every village on the way, and took five days to reach Habarovsk. Here came my most perilous moment, as on leaving the steamer everyone had to show their passes, and of course I had none. I avoided this difficulty by staying on the boat for

the night; and next morning I betook myself to the house of a friend, who came on board and fetched me. I spent the day with him, and we devoted it to seeing the town.

I had every intention of seeing as much as possible, during my journey eastwards, of this country—hitherto unknown to me—which was developing with such extraordinary rapidity, especially since the construction of the railway by the Ussur. Villages were springing up like mushrooms, and soon became towns of a considerable size. Habarovsk itself had developed from the insignificant hamlet of Habàrovka into an important town which is now the residence of the Governor-General of the Amur province. It is situated at the junction of the Amur with the Ussur, and stands in a most picturesque position on a steep and lofty cliff around whose base flow the two mighty rivers. But this chief town of a vast and fertile country is itself like nothing but a great barrack; nearly all the houses have the appearance of official buildings, and one meets soldiers in the streets at every turn. As in most Russian towns, there is no look of comfort; the streets are unpaved and very dusty, and are dimly lighted at night by oil lamps standing at a respectful distance from each other. I found the town museum, however, by no means ill-equipped.

Faithful to my intention of learning all I could about the country, I gladly accepted the invitation of a friend, near whose place of abode I must pass, and went to visit him at Nikolsk-Ussurìsk. This place had only within the year attained to the dignity of being called a town, and, like many others in the province, it swarmed with soldiers; which was explained by the fact that the slaughtering of Chinese was not yet entirely at an end, and, as was supposed, preparations were also being made for war with Japan. As the district lies in close proximity to China, Korea, and Japan, and is the probable theatre of future warlike operations, the Russian Government is

apparently taking its measures in good time, and by drafting in large numbers of soldiers is converting the province into a sort of military camp.

After a stay of four-and-twenty hours at Nikolsk-Ussurisk I went on to Vladivostock, a very pretty seaport of some thirty thousand inhabitants, for which—not without good grounds—a brilliant future is prophesied. Its situation is charming, and in its public arrangements it is already far in advance, not only of most Siberian towns, but also of many in European Russia. Here I stayed three days before I could arrange for my passage on a foreign vessel, but at length all was ready, and my last night in Siberia arrived. I slept but little. The thought that next morning I was to bid farewell to all that time had made so familiar to me mingled with my fears for the successful achievement of my escape. So often in my life had some small chance cruelly frustrated all my plans that I naturally trembled now for the result of the present adventure. I had no desire to find myself suddenly bound for the icy regions of Yakutsk instead of for the lands of freedom, and I prepared beforehand for every possibility.

All went well, however, and next morning I boarded a ship that was going to Japan. Yet, when the boat weighed anchor and danger no longer threatened me, a strange feeling of sadness came over me, as though I were parting, not from the land of prison and exile, but from a dear home. Thus can custom attach a man even to chains and bondage. But I felt that it was not only from use and wont that I was parting; I was not merely leaving Siberia, but Russia—and perhaps for ever.

It was a dismal day, the sky was covered with heavy clouds, and rain flowed in torrents. Our steamer rolled violently, and many of the passengers were seasick; but, though I had hardly ever been on the sea before, I remained immune, and rejoiced thereat, as I had another

long voyage before me. We soon began to skirt the coast of the Korean peninsula, and entered two harbours, those of Gensan and Fusan, remaining four-and-twenty hours in each. I went on shore with some other passengers to see the towns, which in many respects resemble those of Japan—the same style of building, the same apparent superfluity of shops and booths. The Japanese appear to be the ruling spirits there, and the efforts of Russia to oust them do not seem likely to be crowned with success; nor in my opinion are they justified, for Japan has every right to exercise her civilising influence on Korea.

I also visited a Korean village in the neighbourhood of Gensan, and was astonished at its primitive character. It consisted of one very narrow street bordered by straw-thatched wooden huts, which had neither windows nor doors, the latter being replaced by loose boards. The whole population evidently lived principally in the street, carrying on all occupations there—cooking, eating, and so forth.

Five days after our departure from Vladivostock the steamer dropped anchor in the harbour of Nagasaki. As soon as the health regulations had been complied with I got into one of the little boats that had crowded alongside and went to an hotel close to the sea. Compared with Russian inns it seemed to me cheap, clean, and comfortable; and the Japanese servants spoke a little broken Russian.

In Nagasaki I had to decide how I would pursue my journey. I might go by the Suez Canal to one of the ports of Western Europe, and that was the shortest and cheapest route; but I had a great wish to see something of North America while the opportunity offered, and thus to complete the journey round the world that had been begun so much against my will. I inquired about the next boat for San Francisco, and found it would not leave for nine or ten days, but I resolved to employ the interval in seeing the neighbourhood.

Nagasaki is a rather large town of over one hundred thousand inhabitants, and lies scattered picturesquely over the hills that surround a fine bay. Most of the streets, especially in the Japanese quarter, are too narrow for horse traffic to be possible through them; horses are, therefore, replaced by men, who with their little two-wheeled carriages (*jinrikisha*) play the part of cab horses, and are called *kurnei*. There are so many of them that they literally stand before every house, and crowd in front of the hotels and big shops. They surround any stranger in the street, bidding against each other for his custom, and each trying to win his favour, chattering in broken Russian or English. For the modest sum of ten *sen* (about 2½*d.*) the course, or twenty *sen* the hour, the *kurnei* will take his "fare" with marvellous swiftness up hill and down dale; and it not seldom happens that though the perspiration may be streaming from the brow of the *kurnei*, the "civilised" European in his little carriage may be seen laying a stick or an umbrella across his shoulders to urge him onward. The poor fellow who thus turns himself into a beast of burden must give almost half of his hardly earned day's wage to the proprietor of the *jinrikisha*, and must also pay something to the State for the licence authorising him to support himself in this laborious way. His living, however, is cheap enough, his food consisting of rice and an inferior kind of fish.

Most of the houses in Nagasaki are two-storied wooden buildings, the ground-floor being used as a shop, inn, or workshop. It was a puzzle to me where all these innumerable shops could find customers, and how they managed to exist. In my rambles I often saw a whole row of shops without a single purchaser, and if one entered he was instantly surrounded as though a customer were the rarest of guests.

The houses in the Japanese quarter are built in a wonderfully light and airy fashion, as if just run up hastily for summer quarters. Throughout the town there reigns

the most perfect order; the streets are excellently paved, and the portion before each house is kept clean and watered by the occupier. There is never the least dust, and the air is singularly mild and pure. One feels how each breath dilates and strengthens the lungs, and it is not to be wondered at that many Russians and English use Nagasaki as a health-resort.

The European quarter, along the quay, is full of hotels and restaurants, banks, and other houses of business. Here the streets are somewhat wider, and the houses more solidly built, with the lower stories of brick, while many of them have verandas and front gardens. Life in Nagasaki is wonderfully cheap, but it is also a trifle monotonous, particularly for a stranger not conversant with the language. There is little in the way of "sights" —two or three temples of Buddha, with gigantic pictures of Sakia-Mouni, a commercial institute with samples of native goods, and the well-known tea-houses; that is all the visitor is invited to inspect. But the neighbourhood is extremely beautiful, and at every step one is forced to admire the industry of the Japanese, who leave no inch of soil untilled; except the very tops of the rocky hills, all is carefully cultivated. And yet, notwithstanding this heavy labour that the Japanese expends upon his land, his existence seems to have something of the ethereal and fairylike; and many things in his wonderful country contribute to produce an impression of unreality, as if they were happening not in actual life, but on the screen of a cinematograph.

The "progress" that Japan has made during the latter half of the nineteenth century is doubtless very striking; but it seems to me overestimated by many Europeans and also by the Japanese themselves. Only a very small part of the population has been affected by Western civilisation—a thin layer of the upper classes in the coast towns. The rest of the people are scarcely touched by it; not only beliefs and customs, but the whole mode of living

remains the same, both in town and country, as it has been from time immemorial. The primitive nature of the Japanese character reveals itself in the transparent honesty everywhere prevalent. No house or shop is shut up for the night; nobody touches what does not belong to him; and lost property when found is immediately restored to the owner. But in the seaports where European culture already makes its influence felt, it may be feared that the Japanese will soon adopt new ideas of "honour."

I left Nagasaki on board the huge Pacific steamer *China*, belonging to an American company. The two days that the boat stopped at Yokohama I spent in visiting that town and the capital Tokio, which is reached in about twenty minutes by rail; but there is no need to give my superficial impressions of such well-known places.

During the first five days of the voyage I could talk with none of my fellow-passengers, as I spoke no English, and I found this very wearisome; but at Yokohama we were joined by a Frenchman, a German, and a Japanese who spoke a little German, and we four formed an interesting little international society, the members of which still keep in touch with one another.

On the sixteenth day we reached Honolulu, where our boat was to wait four-and-twenty hours. I had already heard when I was in Blagovèstshensk that a good friend of mine, Dr. N. Russel, was living on one of the Hawaiian islands; so I determined to find out whether he was in Honolulu, and if so to pay him a visit during the boat's stay here. With the help of my French travelling-companion I managed to find out, though only towards evening, that my friend lived on the island of Hawaii, but that he happened just then to be in Honolulu. However, as when I found the house where he was staying he was not at home, I left a note telling him that an old comrade of his, who was travelling from Siberia to Western Europe, would like to see him, begging him to come on board the *China* next morning and to ask

for "the Russian." I purposely signed my name very indistinctly, for I wanted to see if he would recognise me, as it was fully twenty years since we had met.

While I was on deck next day I saw a grey-haired gentleman in a white coat come on board. I went towards him at once, (though he bore no resemblance to my comrade of old days,) and when I found that he was seeking "the Russian" I called him by his name, and asked if he knew who I was. He looked at me for some time, but could not recognise me, so much had I altered since we had been together; and at last I had to tell him my name.

"Deutsch! is it you? How did you come here?" he cried, as he embraced me. I told him in a few words the story of my escape, and that I was on my way to Europe.

"And you're going on this very day? No, we can't allow that! You must stay with me. We'll stay here for a day or two, and then you must come back to the farm with me!"

His invitation was so cordial that I should have accepted it immediately could I have afforded to forfeit the value of my ticket from Honolulu to San Francisco, about fifty dollars; but when Dr. Russel understood my difficulty he cried—

"Nonsense! That shan't prevent you. If you lose your money I shall pay the difference myself." And after some discussion I yielded to his insistence, and went on shore with him.

I found that Dr. Russel was not only practising as a physician in Hawaii, but that he was a member of the Senate, and was at present in Honolulu to attend the session of that legislative body; consequently I remained there for several days, and had full time to admire the lovely town. I then went back with my friend to the island of Hawaii, where his wife awaited us, and there spent a month; during which time I learned from the Russels and their friends, and also from books, a great deal

about both the present and past history of these wonderful islands. The lives of the natives exhibit much that is curious, and also much that is tragic; but I must not dilate on all that I saw. I will only mention the fact that the Hawaiians are dying out with almost inconceivable rapidity. Of the strong, healthy race, who when Cook discovered the islands numbered four hundred thousand souls, after the lapse of not quite a hundred years only about twenty thousand are left, and this remnant afflicted with various diseases that were unknown previous to the arrival of Europeans.

My stay with the Russels gave me much pleasure; we made expeditions to various parts of the island, to see the volcano Kilauea, the sugar plantations, the native villages, and so on; and we were never tired of congratulating ourselves on the turn of fortune that had brought us together on this island of the Pacific. At last, towards the end of July, after a delightful visit, I set out on my travels once more, this time in a sailing-ship. We were twenty-six days on the journey to San Francisco; though the weather was generally fine, I became heartily tired of the voyage, and was very glad when on the evening of August 25th we arrived in the harbour of San Francisco. Dr. Russel had given me introductions to friends of his, and with their help I made myself at home in the Californian capital. After ten days' rest there I went on to Chicago, and so to New York.

In Chicago I was received, through a letter of introduction, by two Polish Socialists, immigrants who were living there. They welcomed me very kindly, but unfortunately my ticket did not allow of my remaining with them more than two days. President McKinley had been assassinated on the very day before my arrival in Chicago; people had quite lost their heads, and turned upon peaceable Socialists, accusing them of anarchism. My friends therefore advised me to be careful in travelling, and not to use my own name; so I selected a pseudonym and travelled *incognito*.

In New York another comrade, Dr. Ingermann, received me, and I stayed in his house four weeks; after which I embarked in the English steamship *Satrapia* for Liverpool. I pass over my voyage, a stay of two weeks in London, and the same in Paris, as containing nothing worthy of note. Everywhere on the Continent I met with old comrades, many of whom had changed much during the long years of our separation. Some could not recognise me at all, others only with difficulty; all regarded me as one come from another world.

From Paris I went to Zurich. This was the final point of my six months' journey from Blagovèstshensk, and here dwelt my old friends the Axelrods,[1] from whom I had parted seventeen and a half years before. After a journey round the world of not quite the usual type, I returned to them again on November 5th, 1901.

"Look! he hasn't changed a bit," cried Axelrod, as he pointed me out to his wife at the station. But it was only at the first moment of meeting that it seemed so to him.

For over a year now I have been living again in freedom, going about from one town to another. During that time I have learned to feel at home in more than one European country; but it may be readily believed that what is passing in my native land interests me beyond everything else. Eighteen years make but a brief span in the life of a nation; yet during that period a transformation has come over Russia that must meet the eyes of even a superficial observer. At the time of my arrest at Freiburg, in 1884, there were but a few groups of revolutionists, and they were recruited chiefly from the young student classes, who rebelled against existing social and political conditions. And, as I have explained, owing to the methods of wholesale executions and arrests adopted by the Government, these organisations dwindled and almost

[1] See chap. i. *et seq.*—*Trans.*

entirely disappeared; so that from the end of the eighties thorough-going reaction was triumphant for a time. Of late years, however, it has been quite otherwise. The publications issued by our secret press and distributed throughout the length and breadth of the Russian Empire, calling on the people to rise against the existing despotism, number above one hundred thousand, and they meet with energetic response among the population of large towns and factory districts. Workmen collect in great crowds in the streets along with the students, and by means of monster demonstrations they voice their demand for political freedom and the abolition of autocratic government. The Tsar and his ministers endeavour by the most cruel and severe measures to quench the torch that has been kindled in the land: the greater part of Russia has been placed under martial law; the prisons can hardly contain the numbers of their captives; those who protest against such a régime are sent to Siberia by the trainload. But nothing can stem the tide of the movement; it will rise higher and higher, embracing ever wider circles of the people, and the hour is not far off when autocracy will be laid low, as it was in Western Europe so many generations ago. My flight from Siberia has taken place at a moment in our history which is full of hope for the future.

In Western Europe also great changes have taken place during the last two decades, though none, perhaps, so significant as in Russia. In Germany the special laws against Social Democrats have been repealed; and this has not only made a great difference to our party, but has altered the internal life of the nation in a striking manner. In one respect, however, Germany has made no advance: she is still ready to lend her aid to Russian despotism. Just in the same manner as I was arrested and delivered over to the Russian Government eighteen years ago, though guilty of no offence against German law, so a compatriot of mine has suffered a like fate even while I have been writing this memoir. The Russian student

Kalayev was arrested in Mysolowitz (1902) without any warrant, and handed over to the Russian gendarmerie; since which he has not been heard of. The Prussian police have in no way altered their methods during the years that have flown; but to the credit of the German people I must admit, that with the exception of official journals, the entire press was most indignant over this complaisance of the German Government towards the Russian.

APPENDIX

(See Chapters ii., iii., and iv., and p. 46)

IN answer to an interpellation made in the German Reichstag, on the occasion of the Königsberg political trial in July, 1904, the Imperial Chancellor, Count von Bülow, said :—

"Our records afford plentiful material for judging as to the methods which Prince Bismarck considered advisable in the interest of Germany when dealing with questions such as these. I will select only two cases.

"The first case relates to the circumstances which occurred in 1881 and 1882 in connection with the expulsion from this country of the Russian subject, Stanislaus Mendelssohn; the second to those of the extradition of the Russian subject, Leo Deutsch-Buligin, in 1884.

"Mendelssohn, according to a communication made by us to the Russian Government, was to be taken to the frontier and handed over to the Russian frontier officials. The Russian authorities, however, were not informed in time, and Mendelssohn succeeded in escaping before his delivery to the Russian authorities could be effected. The following correspondence relates to the case.

"In a communication to the Minister of Justice and to the Minister of the Interior, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, representing the Imperial Chancellor, Prince von Bismarck, says :—

> "'The Russian Government attaches great importance to the capture of Stanislaus Mendelssohn, and I hold that it is on political grounds desirable for us to respond to this wish. The expulsion would be a measure lawfully admissible, even were it undertaken merely out of complaisance towards the Russian Government.'

"Also in a despatch to St. Petersburg there occurs the following :—

> "'You will take pains to ascertain whether the Russian Government . . . has any further wishes on the subject of this expulsion (*i.e.* of Mendelssohn and his companions).'

"A Foreign Office memorandum, made on the Mendelssohn case at the time, concludes:—

"'To Russian eyes this turn of events will be charged as a lack of good feeling on the part of our officials.'

"To this Prince Bismarck adds an autograph marginal note:—

"'With perfect justice; and the occurrence, as regards our relations with Russia, stands in damaging contradiction to the instructions I gave for encouraging confidence at St. Petersburg.'

"Finally in one of the communications to our Ambassador at St. Petersburg, signed by Prince Bismarck, there is the following sentence:—

"'The occurrence that has taken place is in direct opposition to my intention, and I regret extremely that the Russian Government should be given good grounds for doubting the genuineness of the assurances that had been previously given.'

"Deutsch, who was declared by the Russian Government to be a Nihilist, was, at its instigation, extradited by the Government of Baden, and was afterwards condemned to penal servitude by a court-martial at Odessa.

"The following excerpts from the Foreign Office records concerning the Deutsch case may serve to show the first Imperial Chancellor's point of view.

"In a communication to the Russian representative at Darmstadt the Secretary of State, Count Hatzfeld, is commissioned by Prince Bismarck to say:—

"'I beg to observe that it would be advantageous to our political relations with Russia if on our side we should be able to meet the lawful desire of the Russian Government to effect the capture of a Russian revolutionist, designated by that Government as daring and dangerous, and as having escaped from a Russian prison.'

"A despatch from the same Secretary of State to the Grand Ducal Government of Baden contains the following passage:—

"'As Deutsch will be prosecuted in Russia by ordinary criminal law, and, for political reasons, it is important to fall in with the desire of the Russian Government, I feel I may express the hope that the Grand Ducal Administration will be ready to lend its assistance, in order that the prisoner may be delivered over to the Russian authorities.'

"In a personal report to His Majesty the Emperor on this occasion, Prince Bismarck says :—

> "'In case, however, this instruction—namely, the proofs necessary to the extradition—should be delayed, they—namely, the Russian Government—wish that the expulsion of the above-named should be carried out in such a manner as to make it possible for the Russian authorities to capture him on Russian territory. His Majesty the Emperor of Russia is personally greatly concerned in the fulfilment of the desire expressed by his Government. In the interests of our relations with Russia it is, in my humble opinion, of great importance that everything should be done on our side to further this express desire.'

"A communication to the Grand Ducal Government of Baden, also signed by the Prince himself, runs as follows :—

> "'His Majesty the Emperor of Russia attaches great importance to securing for trial in Russia this dangerous Nihilist, who is implicated in other crimes. The fulfilment or the thwarting of this desire will therefore not be without reaction upon the feelings which the Emperor Alexander entertains towards German politics, feelings which have been fostered by our foreign policy with care and success in the interests of peace. According to the Constitution of Russia the personal convictions and impressions of the sovereign are all-powerful in affecting the policy of this great neighbouring kingdom. Under these circumstances it is, on political grounds, important that the wishes of the Russian Government should be complied with. Should the extradition, therefore, be refused, the Foreign Office and our diplomacy in general would bear the responsibility for the reaction on the relations of this country with Russia.'

"So far Prince Bismarck.

"I may add that during the last five years only three Russian revolutionists have been expelled over the Russian frontier, and that these were undoubted anarchists, whom we ourselves could not retain here, and whose advent we could not expect other countries to permit. Besides these three notorious anarchists, who were expelled beyond the Russian frontier, a larger number of political suspects have been expelled as undesirable aliens. But no one of these political suspects has been sent across the Russian frontier.

"I declare, therefore, that all that has been here brought forward as to favours shown by German authorities towards the Russian authorities, and as to a weak yielding to the Russian Government on the part of the German Government, is not borne out by fact. . . .

. . . . . .

"It has also been said to-day that it is very difficult to define an anarchist, and what are to be looked upon as anarchistical doings. In theory that may be difficult where, *e.g.*, it comes to framing a legal prohibition. In practice, however, the thing is far simpler. I think there can be no one in this house who doubts that writings such as those which my honourable friend sitting next me, the Minister of Justice, has recently read aloud in the Prussian Diet bear an anarchical character.

"I might also point out, however, that the determination as to what Russians the Russian agent's powers of supervision shall extend over, and about whom information should be imparted to him, is entirely reserved to the German authorities. It is the duty of these latter to see that the Russian police should be given assistance so far as, and no farther than, this may serve the purpose of our common warfare against anarchy. If mistakes arise therefrom they will be corrected. There is no question at all of proceedings against Russian Liberals, or even against German subjects. No obstacle whatever is put in the way of any Russian student who wishes for instruction in our universities and lecture-rooms. Foreign students will be treated with the same liberality as those native to this country. But the decision as to what foreigners in our midst shall or shall not be permitted to do rests with the Government of this country, and not with foreign Nihilists or their aiders and abettors in the Social Democratic party. And if these foreign gentlemen are as insolent as they have shown themselves of late, if they make such impertinent declarations as that just read out by Herr Bebel—and as, in fact, have been launched by the present Slavonic students, led by Herr Mandelstamm and Herr Silberfarb—I shall certainly take measures for the expulsion of such people. In no country in the world would such a misdemeanour be tolerated from foreigners. In no other country would foreigners so presume. Compassion and consideration where they are due, tolerance and protection for those who submit to our laws and observe them, and who behave themselves decently. But we in Germany have not got to such a point that we can allow ourselves to be led by

the nose by such beggarly rascals and conspirators as these. We are too good to be used for a laboratory of nihilistic explosives."

This threat to the "beggarly rascals and conspirators" was shortly afterwards carried into execution. Mandelstamm and Silberfarb were expelled, together with twelve other Russian students. The Tsar must feel satisfied that it is considered important in Berlin to fulfil promptly the express wishes of the Russian Government.

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